Story by Kyo Shirodaira Art by Eita Mizuno

13

Spiral

THE BONDS OF REASONING

Spiral THE BONDS OF REASONING 13

STORY/KYO SHIRODAIRA
ART/EITA MIZUNO

We turn away

To face

The SPIRAL

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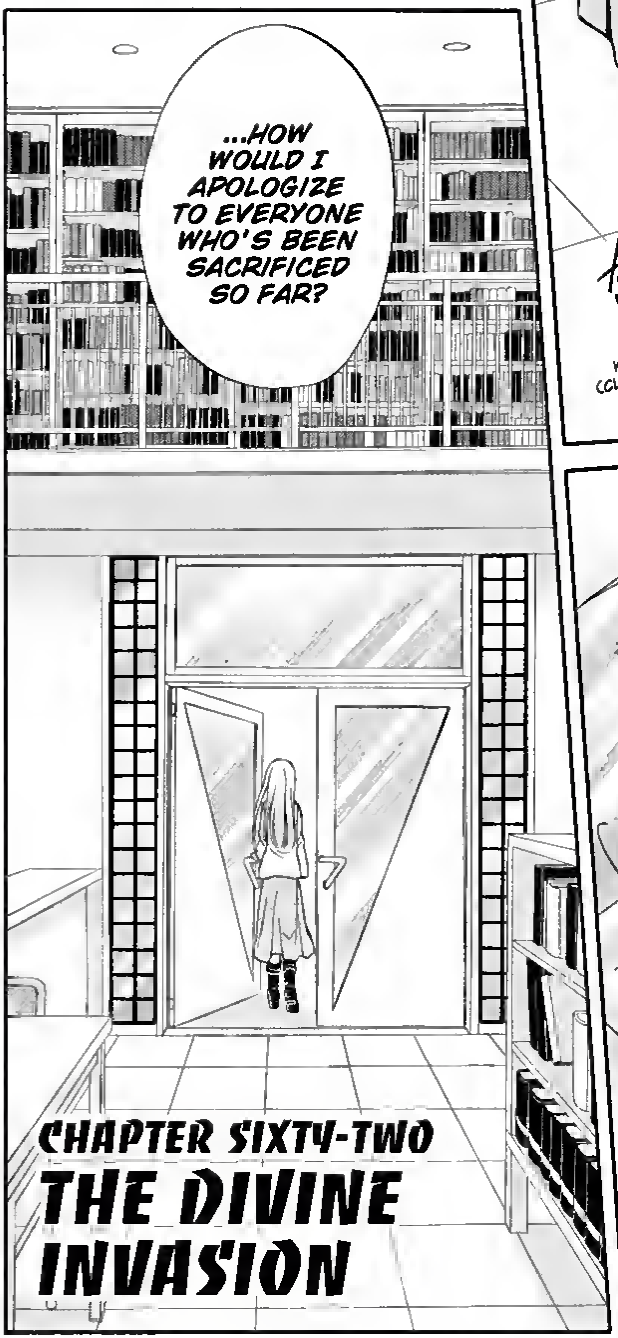
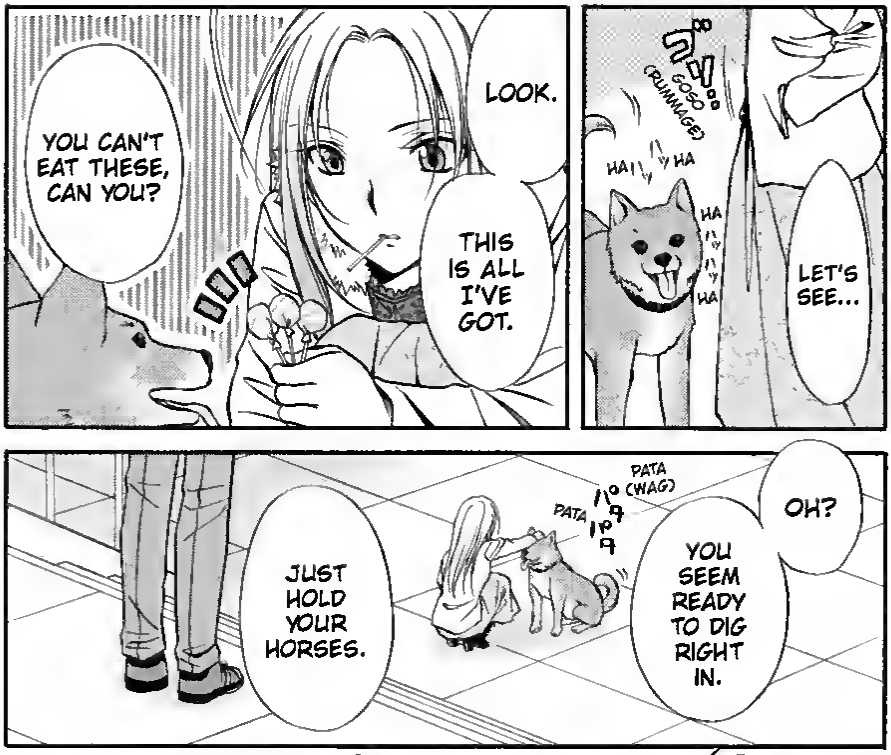
CHAPTER SIXTY-TWO
THE DIVINE INVASION
YOU TWO...
...WHAT CAN YOU POSSIBLY BE PLANNING, CONFINED AS YOU ARE?
DO YOU REALLY THINK THAT THE WORTHLESS BUMS...
...WHO ABANDONED YOU IN THIS WORLD WOULD ALLOW YOU SUCH FREEDOM?
SOON, I'M GOING TO PLUNGE MY HAND INTO THE DARKNESS WITHIN HIZUMI.
AYUMU'S TOUGH. LOOKS LIKE I'M IN FOR TROUBLE.
GARI (CRUNCH)


...HOW WOULD I APOLOGIZE TO EVERYONE WHO'S BEEN SACRIFICED SO FAR?
CHAPTER SIXTY-TWO
THE DIVINE INVASION

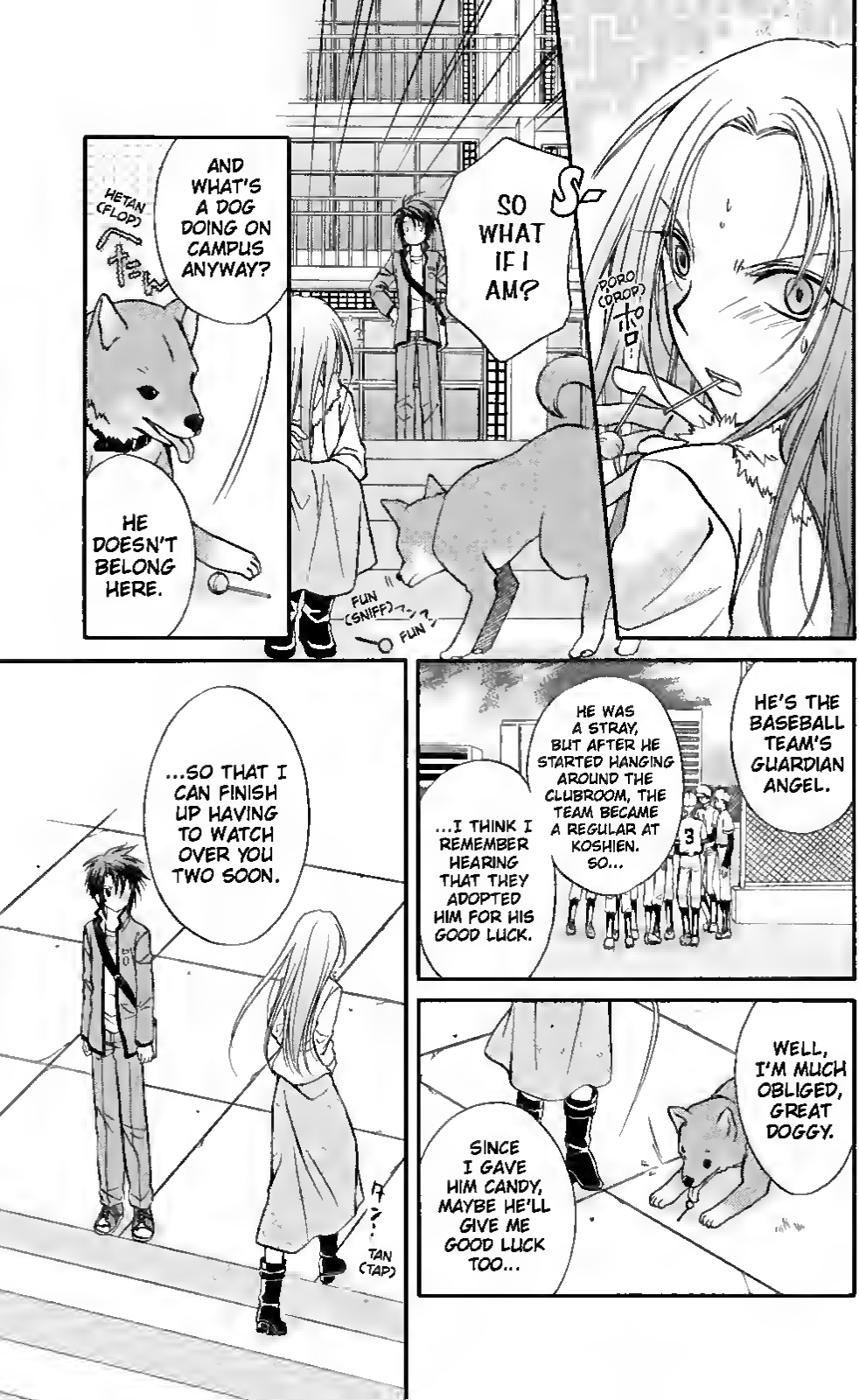
...NOT LIKE I CAN DO ANY-THING.
KA (CLACK)

KII (CREAK)
IF I WERE TO RESIST YOUR FATE...

KOON
KAAN (DAANG)
KIIN (DIING)
KOON (DOONG)
HA (PANT)
HA
I DON'T HAVE ANYTHING TO GIVE YOU, OKAY?
PATA (WAG)
PAT
... WHAT IS IT?
WAU (WOOF)
WAU
WAU
WAU


LOOK.
THIS IS ALL I'VE GOT.
YOU CAN'T EAT THESE, CAN YOU?
GOSO (RUMMAGE)
HA
HA
HA
HA
HA
LET'S SEE...
OH?
PATA (WAG)
PATA
YOU SEEM READY TO DIG RIGHT IN.
JUST HOLD YOUR HORSES.

...I WOULD NEVER HAVE GUESSED YOU'RE GOOD WITH ANIMALS.
BERI (RIP)


AND WHAT'S A DOG DOING ON CAMPUS ANYWAY?
HETAN (FLOP)
HE DOESN'T BELONG HERE.
SO WHAT IF I AM?
PORO (DROP)
FUN (SNIFF)
FUN
HE'S THE BASEBALL TEAM'S GUARDIAN ANGEL.
HE WAS A STRAY, BUT AFTER HE STARTED HANGING AROUND THE CLUBROOM, THE TEAM BECAME A REGULAR AT KOSHIEN. SO...
...I THINK I REMEMBER HEARING THAT THEY ADOPTED HIM FOR HIS GOOD LUCK.
WELL, I'M MUCH OBLIGED, GREAT DOGGY.
SINCE I GAVE HIM CANDY, MAYBE HE'LL GIVE ME GOOD LUCK TOO...
...SO THAT I CAN FINISH UP HAVING TO WATCH OVER YOU TWO SOON.
TAN (TAP)

I MEAN IT.
I HAVE TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT SOME-THING.
I HAVE NOTHING TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT.
SO LONG.
IF WHAT YOU TOLD ME IS CORRECT ...
I'VE GOT A LEAD.
...THEN I'M CERTAIN I HAVE HOPE.
AND I'M CONFIDENT ABOUT IT.
I DON'T SEE A CONCRETE FATE IN STORE FOR US.

...THAT'S A BOLD THING TO SAY.
BUT IT'S THE TRUTH.
HEAR ME OUT. YOU OWE ME THAT MUCH.
KURU (FWIP)
...FINE.
KON (KONK)
BUT FIRST, GET SOME SUGAR IN YOU.

I WANT TO MAKE SURE THAT HEAD OF YOURS IS RUNNING SMOOTHLY.
新聞部
SIGN: NEWSPAPER CLUB
HUH?
AYUMU'S...
...NOT HERE?
I WAS SURE HE'D BE WITH YOU, HIZUMI-SAN.
PARI (CRUNCH)
KATA (CLICK)
KATA
HE HASN'T COME BY.

YOU GOT THAT RIGHT.
NOT EVEN LIKE YOU'RE HIS TYPE, OR NOTHIN'.
KIPA (BLUNT)
I THOUGHT FOR SURE HE'D GONE TO PATCH THINGS UP WITH YOU, PIGTAILS.
PERA (FLIP)
HE'S NOT THE KIND OF PERSON WHO'D TRY TO GET ON MY GOOD SIDE NOW.
HE RAN OFF AS SOON AS CLASS LET OUT. SAID HE HAD SOMETHIN' TO TAKE CARE OF.
EVEN THOUGH YOU'RE TECHNICALLY OLDER THAN HIM, THE REST IS THE OTHER WAY 'ROUND, PIGTAILS.
PIKU (TWITCH)
DON'T GO GETTIN' YOUR HOPES UP.
YOU LOOK CUTE ON THE OUTSIDE, BUT YOU'RE TOUGH AS NAILS ON THE INSIDE.
PAKAN (WHAP)
BUN (FLING)
THAT'S RUDE.
AYUMU'S TYPE...
WHO, ME?
...IS AN OLDER LADY WHO LOOKS COOL AND CONFIDENT ON THE OUTSIDE BUT IS ACTUALLY TENDER ON THE INSIDE, AM I RIGHT?

I GAVE YOU A CRACKER, SO PLEASE GET OUT OF MY SIGHT.
MM-HM.
PARI (CRUNCH)
BUT ACTUALLY ...
...THERE'S SOMETHING I WANTED TO TELL YOU MYSELF, PIGTAILS.
GATA (RATTLE)
GATA
ZABAA (SPLOOSH)
IF YOU STAY INVOLVED LIKE YOU ARE NOW...
ABOUT THIS OUTRAGEOUS FATE THAT AWAITS US.
KYU (SQUEAK)
... PIGTAILS ...
...THERE'S NO DOUBT YOU'RE GONNA GET HURT.

KACHI (CLICK)
KACHI KACHI
BO (FWOO)
EVEN THOUGH IT FEELS LIKE AYUMU-SAN'S MATURE AND ADULT-LIKE NOW...
...WITHOUT ME, HE'S THE TYPE TO RUN AWAY CRYING WHEN THE TIME COMES.
KUI (PUSH)
...BUT I DON'T NEED YOU TO WORRY ABOUT ME.
GATAN (CLUNK)
KATA (CLACK)
...I APPRECIATE YOUR CONCERN...
NOW, AS EVER, I HAVE TO BE THERE FOR HIM.
ZU (SIP)
MORE IMPORTANTLY, WHAT ABOUT YOU, HIZUMI-SAN?
KII (CREAK)
WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO DO TO NARUMI-SAN?
SHE REALLY IS TOUGH AS NAILS...
KOTO (THNK)

WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO SHOW THAT BOY?
NOTHIN' AT ALL.
KOTO (THINK)
I'M JUST AIMIN' TO SHOW HIM WHAT I'VE SEEN FOR MYSELF.
AND...
...WHEN HE'S SEEN EVERYTHIN' HE HAS TO, WE'LL FACE EACH OTHER.
THE START OF OUR CONVICTIONS' DECIDING BATTLE.
UH-HUH...
SOUNDS LIKE IT'S GOING TO BE A TENSE SITUATION.

BECAUSE NARUMI-SAN DOESN'T BELIEVE HE'S GOING TO WIN.
BUT AT THE SAME TIME, HE'S GOING TO BE STUBBORN ABOUT ADMITTING DEFEAT.
NO.
KI (CREAK)
BUT NARUMI-SAN ISN'T GOING TO LOSE.
...BECAUSE HE'LL HAVE YOU, PIGTAILS?
KUI (YANK)
THAT'S THE SCARY PART.
JUST HOW DOES ONE DEFEAT...
...SOMEBODY WHO'S RESOLVED NOT TO LOWER HIS HEAD, NO MATTER WHAT?

PATAN (SHUT)
...BUT AS FOR NARUMI-SAN...
...WHERE ON EARTH DID HE GO?
HE'D BETTER NOT BE MAKING A PASS AT SOME NEW GIRL.
... AYUMU-KUN...
...I...
GAJI (CRUNCH)
GAJI
...HAVE SEEN A LOT MORE THAN YOU HAVE.

NOBODY WANTED TO COMPLETELY BELIEVE SUCH A BLOODY OUTCOME WAS INEVITABLE AND KILL CHILDREN OVER IT.
AND THERE WERE PLENTY OF PEOPLE WHO TRIED TO PROTECT THE BLADE CHILDREN.
BUT EVERYONE WAS CRUELLY BETRAYED ...
...AND IN THE END THEY SAW NO ALTERNATIVE BUT TO ACCEPT THAT SOME WORTHLESS BUM CALLING HIMSELF A CREATOR HAD BEEN BORN INTO THIS WORLD.
EVERYONE WHO SPOKE OF DREAMS THE WAY YOU DO WAS BEATEN AND BROKEN.
MUKUKU (RISE)
THE BODIES KEPT PILING UP.
PORO (DROP)
I DON'T WANT TO SEE THAT HAPPEN AGAIN.
...I'M SURE.
THE BLADE CHILDREN HAVE COME CLOSE TO DEATH COUNTLESS TIMES.
AFTER ALL THE TERRIBLE THINGS THEY'VE SEEN...
...THEY HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO ACCEPT THIS SENSELESS FATE.

SAME GOES FOR YOU. IF YOU HADN'T GONE THROUGH EVERYTHING YOU DID, YOU WOULDN'T HAVE TURNED OUT SO ILL-NATURED.
I'M NOT ILL-NATURED.
BUT IF WHAT YOU'RE SAYING IS CORRECT ...
WHERE?
...DON'T YOU SEE THE ONE HUGE CONTRADICTION SET BEFORE US?
...
EITHER WAY.
LET'S JUST SAY THAT'S HOW IT IS.
WHY IS HIZUMI WILLING TO SO READILY ACCEPT HIS FATE?
?

NOBODY WOULD JUST BELIEVE IN AN AWFUL DESTINY LIKE THAT.
YOU SAID SO YOURSELF.
THINK ABOUT IT.
THE ONLY GUY WHO'D YIELD TO SUCH A GHASTLY FATE...
...IS ONE WHO'S BATTERED AND BLUE FROM FIGHTING AGAINST IT.
ESPECIALLY WHEN IT'S THE WORST KIND OF FATE, ONE THAT SAYS YOU'LL LOSE YOUR LIFE.
AND YAIBA MIZUSHIRO'S LITTLE BROTHER WOULD BE THE LAST PERSON TO ACCEPT SUCH AN OUTCOME.
AND I AGREE.
ONLY SOMEONE WHO'S BEEN LICKED BY IT.
ONLY SOMEONE WHO'S BEEN MADE TO UNDERSTAND SUCH DESPAIR THAT HE CAN'T TAKE IT.

AS FOR ME, I STOOD UP AGAINST MY BROTHER AT FIRST.
BUT I WAS UTTERLY DEFEATED.
EVERYTHING I TRIED WASN'T ENOUGH.
I COULDN'T REACH WHERE I WANTED TO BE.
SO I HUNG MY HEAD...
PIRI (RIP)
...AND LEARNED TO GIVE UP ON THINGS RIGHT AWAY.
FOR ME TO ARRIVE AT THAT POINT, I'D LOST AND LOST 'TIL I COULDN'T TAKE IT ANYMORE.
PIII (TWEEE)
BUT WHAT ABOUT HIZUMI?
SINCE HE WAS VERY YOUNG, HE HASN'T HAD TO FACE THAT IMPENETRABLE WALL CALLED YAIBA.

FROM THE VERY BEGINNING, HE HAD NO BROTHER WHO EMBODIED THE "PERFECT IDEAL."
PIII
KACHI CLICK
NOBODY WAS MONOPOLIZING THE PLACE HE WISHED TO OCCUPY.
HE'S ALWAYS BEEN EXACTLY WHERE HE WANTED TO BE.
HE'S NEVER BEEN THE LOSER.
YOU WANT ANY PIGTAILS?
NO THANKS
NEVER FELT THAT HELPLESS-NESS.
HE HAS THE FREEDOM TO GET EVERYTHING HE'S EVER WANTED.
SO WHY WOULD SOMEONE LIKE HIZUMI...
...SO EASILY ACCEPT A CRACKPOT STORY LIKE "YOU'RE THE DEVIL TO BE KILLED BY GOD"...
...AND ALLOW HIMSELF TO BE KILLED BY ME?

NOT EVEN MY BROTHER CAN TOUCH HIM, REMEMBER?
THAT'S—
ACCORDING TO FATE'S BLUEPRINT, I'M THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN KILL HIZUMI.
WHY WOULD SOMEONE WHO'S NEVER KNOWN THE PAIN OF LOSING BE SPOOKED BY SOME HYPO-THETICAL OUT-COME...
...AND GIVE UP WITHOUT DOING ANYTHING ABOUT IT?
EVEN BEFORE HAVING TO DUEL ME, HE'D ALREADY GIVEN UP...
...AND LAID DOWN HIS SWORD.
BUT I'M NOT EVEN FIGHTING HIM.
...HE'D PROCLAIM HIMSELF THE VICTOR, JUST AS HE'S DONE HIS WHOLE LIFE, KILL ME...
...AND FIGHT BACK.
ANYONE ELSE WOULD LAUGH AND SAY, "THIS FATE REEKS OF B.S."...

AT FIRST, I THOUGHT IT WAS ALL A FARCE TO TRICK ME, BUT...
...IT'S NOT THAT...
BEING WHO I AM, I KNOW.
HE GIVES OFF THE SAME AIR I USED TO.
BASASA (FLUTTER)
AND GUYS WHO HAVE ONLY EVER COME OUT ON TOP DON'T GIVE OFF THAT AIR.
HE'S AFRAID OF HIS FATE.
DEEP DOWN, HE DOESN'T THINK HE'S ANY MATCH FOR IT.
DO YOU SEE WHAT I'M GETTING AT?

BY HIS OWN POWER, HE CAN'T DO A THING.
HE'S ALREADY WITNESSED A "DESPAIR" OTHER THAN MYSELF.
SUCH A THING HASN'T BEEN OUTLINED ON THE BLUEPRINT OF FATE THAT WE KNOW.
BUT ACCORDING TO MY REASONING, IT HAS TO EXIST.
NO WAY ...
BEFORE HE MET ME...
...HE'D ALREADY COMPLETELY LOST TO HIS FATE.

AND SO LONG AS HE HAS DESPAIR...
...THERE MUST ALSO BE A CORRESPOND-ING "HOPE" ON THAT OUTLINE.
HIZUMI AND I ARE FRONT AND BACK.
AS A PAIR, EACH OF US COMPLETELY NEGATES THE OTHER.
DARK AND LIGHT.
GOD AND THE DEVIL.
SO IF HIZUMI HAS SOME KIND OF "DESPAIR" ...
...IT FOLLOWS THAT I MUST HAVE SOME KIND OF "HOPE."
AM I WRONG?

TEN (TMP)
TEN
PIKU (PERK)
...AYUMU-KUN...
...YOU...
BOTH HIZUMI AND MY BROTHER ARE HIDING KEY INFORMATION THAT HAS AN IMPACT ON OUR FATES.
THEY'RE UP TO SOMETHING, KEEPING THE REST OF US IN THE DARK.

THERE ARE SOME SERIOUS DOUBTS ABOUT WHERE THAT FATE YOU BELIEVE IN IS HEADED.
EVEN SO, YOU PLAN ON JUST GOING ALONG WITH IT?
KORO (ROLL)
HEH...
HOW ABOUT IT?
WHY NOT JUST JOIN ME?

AFTER ALL, IN THE MIDST OF OUR FATE...
...THERE'S A VILE IMPOSTOR PRETENDIN' TO BE "HOPE."
I REALLY DO THINK AYUMU'S GONNA LOSE.
コト KOTO (THINK)
LOOK, PIGTAILS.
KACHI (CLICK)
UH-HUH.
THAT SOUNDS AWFUL.
THE MOMENT ...
...HE MISTAKES IT FOR "HOPE"...
...HE'LL BE SWALLOWED WHOLE BY THAT BEAST.

IF HE KNOWS THAT IT'S A BEAST HE'S GOT ...
...HE COULD ALWAYS THINK OF A WAY TO TAME IT, DON'T YOU THINK?
あぐ
AGU (CHOMP)
SO EVEN IF HE'S STUBBORN, ONCE HE GETS EATEN, IT'S OVER, SEE?
PU (CLICK)
SFX: KII (CREAK)
WE'LL SEE ABOUT THAT.
TA (DASH)

ALL THIS CRAP ABOUT HOPE AND DESPAIR.
YOUR LOGIC'S BUNK.
I'M NOT ABOUT TO ACT BASED ON SOME VAGUE NONSENSE.
WH...
WHAT'RE YOU GOING ON ABOUT?
IF YOU HAVE HOPE, THEN SAY WHAT IT IS EXACTLY.
WHAT IS IT YOU THINK YOU'RE ONTO?

IS HE REALLY ...
...HIZUMI MIZU-SHIRO.
...YAIBA MIZU-SHIRO'S LITTLE BROTHER?

...AM I REALLY KIYOTAKA NARUMI'S LITTLE BROTHER?
WHAT'RE YOU—
AND ME...

WHAT'RE YOU—
AND ME...

...AM I REALLY KIYOTAKA NARUMI'S LITTLE BROTHER?

Spiral

THE BONDS OF REASONING

CHAPTER SIXTY-THREE
RUSTLE OF WINGS

SPIRAL

I DIDN'T BRING MY UMBRELLA TODAY.
NOT GOOD.
THE CLOUDS HAVE MOVED IN.
LOOKS LIKE IT'S REALLY GONNA COME DOWN.
...IS IT TRUE THAT...

...HIZUMI AND I...
...ARE YAIBA MIZUSHIRO AND KIYOTAKA NARUMI'S LITTLE BROTHERS, RESPECTIVELY?
BOTH PARTIES DON'T NECESSARILY HAVE TO BE FAKES.
I CAN BELIEVE THAT ONE IS THE REAL THING AND THE OTHER IS A FAKE.
... LISTEN ...
... AYUMU-KUN.

OH REALLY?
YOU MUST BE SICK IN THE HEAD IF YOU'RE GOING TO START DENYING COLD, HARD FACTS.
I HAVEN'T SEEN ONE SINGLE PIECE OF EVIDENCE...
...THAT PROVES HIZUMI IS DEFINITELY YAIBA'S LITTLE BROTHER.
...HIZUMI WAS HIDDEN AWAY BY KIYOTAKA AND A SELECT FEW FROM THE ORGA-NIZATION...
...AND I FIRST LEARNED ABOUT THE BOY WHEN HE WAS ALREADY THIRTEEN YEARS OLD.
AND AT THE POINT WHEN YOU FIRST MET HIM, HE WAS MERELY INTRODUCED TO YOU AS "YAIBA'S LITTLE BROTHER," RIGHT?
...AS FAR AS THAT GOES ...

AS FAR AS THE DNA TESTING GOES, YOU HAVEN'T CHECKED IT YOURSELF, HAVE YOU?
YOU ALSO LOOK JUST LIKE KIYOTAKA.
AND YOUR DNA—
ALL THEY'D HAVE TO DO IS FIND A KID WHO LOOKS JUST LIKE HIM.
BUT HIS FACE IS THE SPITTING IMAGE OF YAIBA'S.
AND THERE'VE BEEN DNA ANALYSIS, UNDERSTAND?
THEY COULD HAVE TAMPERED WITH THE DATA OF ANY REPORT.
IF IT WAS NECESSARY, MY BROTHER COULD EASILY HAVE DONE IT, SEE?
FOR WHATEVER REASON, HIZUMI COULD BE...
...A FAKE LITTLE BROTHER COOKED UP AFTER YAIBA'S DEATH.
AND THE SAME GOES FOR ME.

YOU WOULDN'T POSSIBLY HAVE THE DATA TO REFUTE THAT.
...HIZUMI'S PARENTAGE MAY BE IN QUESTION...
...BUT YOU'RE YOU.
DON'T YOU HAVE MEMORIES OF CALLING KIYOTAKA "BIG BROTHER" WHEN YOU WERE THREE OR FOUR YEARS OLD?
GIVEN THAT FACT, THERE'S NO WAY YOU COULD HAVE BEEN FABRICATED AS HIS LITTLE BROTHER.
A GOOD FIVE YEARS BEFORE KIYOTAKA AWOKE AS "GOD" AND DEFEATED YAIBA, YOU WERE BORN INTO THE NARUMI FAMILY.

PO
PO
OR MAYBE I WAS ABANDONED MOMENTS AFTER BIRTH AND MERELY TAKEN IN BY THE NARUMIS.
WHEN I WAS BORN...
...I MIGHT HAVE BEEN SWITCHED IN THE HOSPITAL WITH THE REAL "LITTLE BROTHER OF KIYOTAKA NARUMI" AND RAISED IN THE NARUMI HOUSEHOLD.
PO
(PLIP)
THAT DOESN'T PROVE ANYTHING EITHER.
JUST THE KIND OF PRANK THAT FATE AND ITS WHEEL OF FORTUNE WOULD PULL.
...IT'S NOT LIKE MY MOM OR DAD HAVE CARED MUCH ABOUT ME FROM THE START.
AFTER ALL...

IS HE SO DESPERATE TO RESIST FATE THAT HE'D GO SO FAR AS TO DENY ANYTHING THAT SUPPORTS HIS ROLE IN THIS SCENARIO?
IF YOU'RE NOT KIYOTAKA'S LITTLE BROTHER TO BEGIN WITH...
THIS KID...
WOULD HE REALLY TRY TO FIGHT IN SUCH A STATE?

SAAAAAAA
CWSHHHHD
...AND CHALLENGING A BEAST YOU DON'T KNOW THE SIZE OF OR EVEN WHAT IT'S CAPABLE OF...
...NOT BEING ABLE TO TRUST THE GROUND OR THE LEGS THAT SUPPORT YOU...
...WORSE THAN NOT HAVING A WEAPON. IT'S NOT EVEN KNOWING IF YOU HAVE A HAND TO HOLD THE WEAPON...
THAT'S ...
...WHAT CHANCE WOULD HE HAVE AT WINNING AGINST KIYOTAKA!?
...NOT TO MENTION ...
...THEN WHAT'S THE POINT IN FIGHTING ...

...THEN WHAT'S THE POINT IN FIGHTING ...
...NOT TO MENTION ...
THAT'S ...
...WHAT CHANCE WOULD HE HAVE AT WINNING AGINST KIYOTAKA!?

SAAAAAAA (WSHHHHH)
...WORSE THAN NOT HAVING A WEAPON. IT'S NOT EVEN KNOWING IF YOU HAVE A HAND TO HOLD THE WEAPON...
...NOT BEING ABLE TO TRUST THE GROUND OR THE LEGS THAT SUPPORT YOU...
...AND CHALLENGING A BEAST YOU DON'T KNOW THE SIZE OF OR EVEN WHAT IT'S CAPABLE OF...

THE FURTHER HE GOES, THE MORE OF HIMSELF HE LOSES...
...AFTER CHOPPING OFF HIS ARMS AND LEGS AND THEN GUTTING HIMSELF...
HE'S GOING TOO FAR...!
THAT'S THE SAME AS TRYING TO MOVE FORWARD ...
IN THE END, IS HE GOING TO CARVE OUT HIS OWN HEART...!?
I DON'T KNOW WHAT THIS FATE OF MINE IS UP TO.
I CAN'T TRUST ANYTHING.
THE MOMENT I LET MY GUARD DOWN AND SET FOOT ON GROUND THAT MY BROTHER'S MADE, IT'S GAME OVER.
I'LL FALL HEADLONG INTO A GAPING PIT.
AND THEN THERE'S MY BROTHER.
IT'S IN THINGS THAT YOU TAKE FOR GRANTED THAT HE LAYS HIS TRAPS.

...IT'S ...
...A MENTALLY EXHAUSTING STATE TO BE IN.
BUT...
HA (GASP)
...IF I DON'T DOUBT EVERY-THING ...
...I'LL NEVER EVER REACH MY BROTHER.

...BUT...
SFX: KO (CLACK)
...IF YOU MAKE IT SO FAR, ONLY TO LOSE IN THE END...
...YOU'LL BE LEFT WITHOUT EVEN A FRAGMENT OF YOUR HEART.
SU (SWSH)
OR...
...IS IT THAT YOU'VE BEEN DRIVEN UP AGAINST A WALL...?

...AYUMU-KUN...
...SACRIFICING YOURSELF TO GIVE IT YOUR ALL...
...ISN'T BEING HEROIC! YOU UNDERSTAND?
SFX: KATA (TREMBLE) KATA
TSU (TOUCH)
...I'M GIVING IT MY ALL, BUT...

...I INTEND TO TAKE BETTER CARE OF MYSELF THAN BEFORE.
WAAAAAAAAH!
.....

BOTO (PLOP)
ぼと..
NA! NA!
NARUMI-SAN AND KIRIE-SAN ARE GETTING IT ON!
HOW FAR WERE YOU PLANNING ON TAKING THINGS, STANDING LIKE THAT?
HEY, AYUMU.
KIRIE-CHAN MAY REMIND YOU OF YOUR SIS, MADOKA, BUT...
...THEY DON'T EXACTLY LIVE BY THE SAME PRINCIPLES, Y'HEAR?
HA (GASP)
YOU SERIOUSLY HAVE A WEAK SPOT FOR TOUGH OLDER LADIES.
HOW FILTHY! V'ULGAR!!
QUIT JUMPING TO CONCLU-SIONS.
HAA (SIIIGH)

SFX: PA (RELEASE)

FOR ONE THING, I HATE GIRLS THAT REEK OF CIGARETTES.
BUT KIRIE-CHAN QUIT.
THAT'S WHY SHE'S ALWAYS SUCKIN' ON LOLLIPOPS.
THAT'S NONE OF YOUR BUSI-NESS!
SHE'S JUST TRYING TO PANDER TO NARUMI-SAN'S TASTES!
IT'S NOT FAIR! HE'S SO DEFENSE-LESS!
I'M SHOCKED.
GUESS KIRIE-CHAN'S GOT A CUTE SIDE TO HER TOO.
NO! NO!!
SHE'S NARUMI-SAN'S TYPE TO A "T"!
HE'S GOING TO FALL FOR HER FEMININE WILES!!
LIKE I SAID, DON'T ASSUME SO MUCH...
PIPE DOWN, YOU LITTLE MON-KEYS!!
むんず
MUNSU (YANK)

AYUMU-KUN!
WE'RE NOT DONE TALKING, REMEMBERI?
WE'RE TAKING THIS SOMEWHERE ELSE!
COME ON!
AAH!
MOVE IT!
NARUMI-SAN'S BEING CARRIED OFF TO THE ADULT CASTLE!
LET'S GO AFTER THEM!
TA (TAP)
KUN (YANK)
!
NO.
PIG-TAILS.

WHAT LIES AHEAD IS OUR DARKNESS.
YOU CAN'T JUST BARGE IN.
IT SEEMS AYUMU'S GRASPED THE BEAST'S TAIL.
SU (SWSH)
THE TIME FOR THE FINAL BATTLE IS NEAR.
.....

HEH
PASHA (SPLISH)
PORI (SCRATCH)
PORI
.....
STUPID BRATS!

HOW DARE THEY MOCK AN ADULT LIKE THAT!
BASA (RUSTLE)
EITHER WAY.
WHY'D YOU QUIT SMOKING?
PASHI (POP)
SFX: BESHI (SMACK)
SFX ↑: GARI (GRIND) GARI
HE WAS RIGHT.
YOU DO HAVE A TENDER SIDE TO YOU.
DON'T YOU DARE SAY HE WAS RIGHT!
I'M NOT TRYING TO FIT YOUR IDEAL TYPE!!
SORRY.
SU (SWSH)
.....
WITH YOU GUYS HERE ...
...IF I WERE LOITERING AROUND, SMOKING BY MYSELF, I'D LOOK LIKE A WOMAN UP TO NO GOOD.
NOT BAD.

I DON'T CARE ABOUT HER LOOKS.
BUT SHE'S GOTTA BE SO DEPENDABLE THAT SHE'S A BOTHER TO EVERYONE AROUND HER.
THEN WHAT KIND OF WOMAN DO YOU LIKE NOW?
BESIDES, I JUST DECIDED TO CHANGE MY TASTE IN WOMEN.
OH REALLY?
IT SEEMS THAT'S JUST THE KIND OF GIRL I NEED.
I GUESS I MIGHT AS WELL GIVE UP...
NOT LIKE I CARE.
.....
HMM...
BUT EVEN THOUGH MY HEAD KNOWS THAT, MY BODY KEEPS DENYING IT...
はあ…
OH YEAH...

SFX: HAA (SIGH)

SU
SWSH
...BEFORE I FORGET, THIS IS FOR YOU.
LABEL: HIZUMI
I MADE SURE TO GET ENOUGH.
THEY BOTH CONTAIN HAIR FOLLICLES WITH THE ROOT INTACT AND SOME CLOTH WITH BLOOD ON IT.
THIS ONE'S HIZUMI'S, AND THIS ONE'S MINE.
...FOR ME AND HIZUMI ...
THEN PLEASE CONFIRM THE BLOOD MATCHES ...
...BEFORE MY BROTHER FINDS OUT.
THIS SHOULD BE PLENTY TO DO A DNA ANALYSIS, RIGHT?
...PRE-SUMABLY.
BUT IT'S POSSIBLE THAT THE BASIC DATA'S BEEN ALTERED, UNDERSTAND?
...YEAH.
THEY ALREADY HAVE MY BROTHER AND YAIBA'S GENETIC DATA THERE, RIGHT?

BAN (SLAM)
I CAN, BUT...
...I HAVEN'T SAID I'LL HELP YOU OUT WITH THIS YET.
WII (VWEE)
YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO MAKE UP A PLAUSIBLE EXCUSE FOR NEEDING BLOOD SAMPLES FROM THE INVOLVED PARTIES, RIGHT?
...YAIBA'S WITH THE BLADE CHILDREN'S AND MY BROTHER'S WITH MY PARENTS.
THEN IT MIGHT BE A GOOD IDEA TO JUST COMPARE ...
.....
YOU DON'T MISS A TRICK.
KACHI (CLICK)
I SNAGGED SOME WHEN HE CUT HIS FINGER WITH A KNIFE WHILE COOKING DINNER.
...PICKING UP THE HAIR SAMPLES OFF THE FLOOR IS ONE THING, BUT...
...HOW'D YOU GET THE BLOOD?
AND ANYWAY ...

BUT I KNOW WITHOUT A DOUBT THAT HIZUMI'S HARBORING SOME KIND OF "DESPAIR."
I WANT TO EXPLORE EVERY POSSIBILITY THAT COULD POINT ME TO WHAT IT IS.
YOU'LL ONLY BE REASSURED THAT YOU'RE HIS LITTLE BROTHER.
THEN THAT'S FINE.
...EVEN IF I GET IT CHECKED, THE RESULTS WILL BE THE SAME.
SU (SWSH)
.....
...THIS DOESN'T MEAN I'M ON YOUR SIDE.

BUT IF THIS WILL PUT YOUR HEART AT EASE, THEN I'LL LOOK INTO IT FOR YOU.
THANKS.
DEPENDING ON THE OUTCOME ...
...IT COULD SHOW ME MY "HOPE" TOO.
TCH!
PON (TOSS)

OOH!
980円
980
SPARERIBS FOR DIRT CHEAP!
"SPARERIBS ARE PACKED WITH CALORIES AND HAVE TOO MUCH CHOLESTEROL. YOU'RE HEADED STRAIGHT FOR A STROKE!"
AHHH...
BUT AYUMU'LL BE SUCH A PAIN IN THE REAR...
HATA (PAUSE)
はた…
SWEET!
ALL RIGHT!
TONIGHT WE'LL HAVE BBQ!

PON (TOSS)
ポーイ!
OH, WELL.
NO BIGGIE.
NI (GRIN)
?
HMMM.
SERI-OUSLY.
WORRYIN' ABOUT YOUR DIET'S FOR OLD PEOPLE.
THE BIG FIGHT'S ALMOST HERE.
SO WHO CARES ABOUT OUR HEALTH!

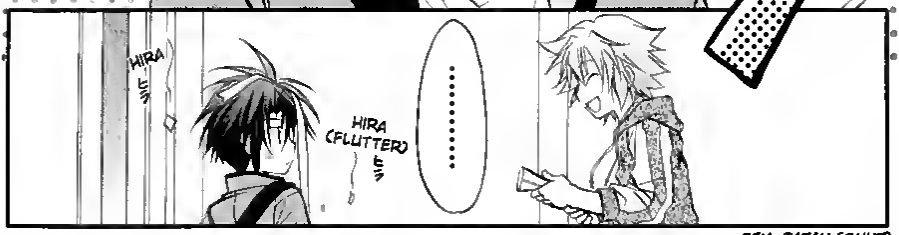
GAA (WHRR)
BESIDES, BOTH AYUMU AND I...

BASA
(PWAP)
...WON'T BE ALIVE THAT MUCH LONGER ANYWAY...
SAAAAAA
(WSHHHH)

Spiral
THE BONDS OF REASONING

SPIRAL

CHAPTER SIXTY-FOUR
WITH DELICATE MAD HANDS

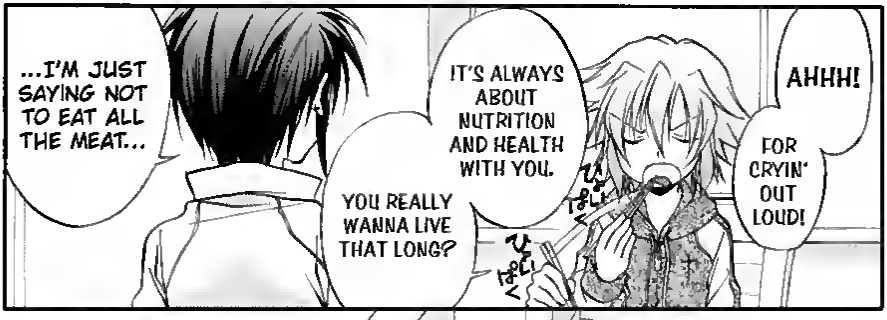


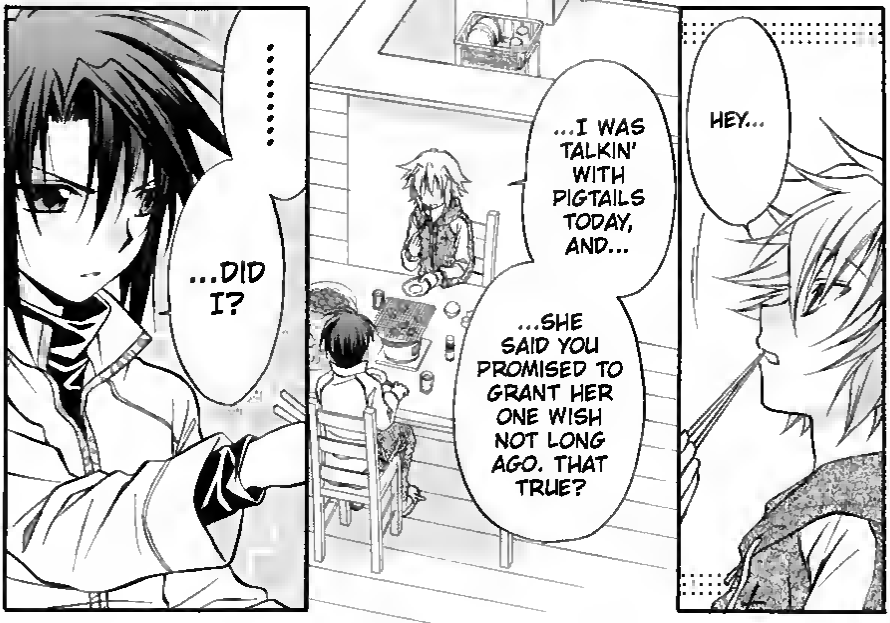
SFX: PATAN (SHUT)

SFX: TA (MARCH) TA TA TA TA

CHAPTER SIXTY-FOUR
WITH DELICATE MAD HANDS

SFX. HYOI (YOINK) PAKU (CHOMP) HYOI PAKU


...I'M JUST SAYING NOT TO EAT ALL THE MEAT...
YOU REALLY WANNA LIVE THAT LONG?
IT'S ALWAYS ABOUT NUTRITION AND HEALTH WITH YOU.
AHHH!
FOR CRYIN' OUT LOUD!



PLEASE BE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE THINGS YOU SAY!!
IF YOU SAID THAT TO HER, SHE'D FLIP HER LID AGAIN...
WELL, IT'S HER FAULT TOO FOR TAKING SO LONG TO TELL ME HER WISH.
THAT ASIDE...
...SINCE THIS IS SUCH A RARE CHANCE, I THINK SHE'S NOT SURE WHAT TO GO WITH.
HAVIN' YOU DRINK MILK FROM YOUR NOSE...
...IS JUST ONE OF THE THINGS SHE'S CONSIDERED.
WHY CAN'T SHE COME UP WITH SOMETHING CUTE LIKE A NORMAL PERSON WOULD?
JUU (SIZZLE)
IT'S 'COS YOU'RE ALWAYS RUDE TO HER THESE DAYS, DON'T YOU RECKON?
AH.
THIS IS GOOD TOO.
MINE
HYOI (OINK)
AGAIN WITH THE MEAT-EATING.
SO.
AYUMU.

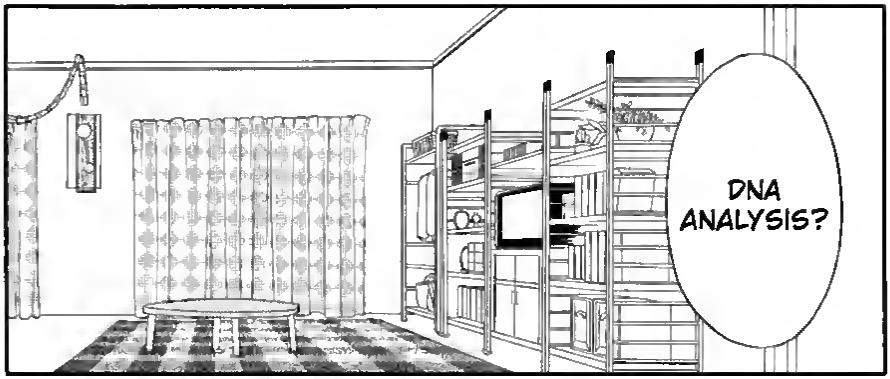
YOU ASKED KIRIE-CHAN TO ANALYZE OUR DNA, DID YOU?
DO (THNK)
HAA (SIGH)
...I SWEAR.
BASA (FWAP)
SFX: KII (CREAK)

POI (TOSS)
KON (KONK)
I GOT LANDED WITH SOMETHING I DO NOT NEED RIGHT NOW.
GI (CREAK)
BUT AFTER THAT, KIYOTAKA INTENTIONALLY DIDN'T TRY TO PROTECT THE CHILDREN.
BUUN (VAMO)
SINCE THE "LITTLE BROTHER" KNOWN AS AYUMU-KUN WAS AROUND WHEN YAIBA WAS DEFEATED, THE OPTION TO NOT KILL THE BLADE CHILDREN WAS MADE POSSIBLE.
POCHI (CLICK)
SO-TEC
IS IT REALLY POSSIBLE THAT AYUMU-KUN AND HIZUMI AREN'T ACTUALLY KIYOTAKA AND YAIBA'S LITTLE BROTHERS?
SO IN THAT SENSE, IT WOULDN'T BE STRANGE FOR KIYOTAKA TO NEED A "LITTLE BROTHER," EVEN IF HE WAS A FAKE.

...HE DROVE THEM INTO EVEN MORE MERCILESS CIRCUM-STANCES.
IN FACT, YOU COULD ALMOST SAY THAT IN ORDER TO MAKE THE BLADE CHILDREN SUITABLE PAWNS FOR WHIPPING AYUMU-KUN INTO SHAPE...
.....
ZOWA (CHILL)
IF HE'D WANTED TO PROTECT THE CHILDREN IN THE FIRST PLACE, HE'D HAVE NO NEED TO MAKE UP SOME "LITTLE BROTHER OF YAIBA" NAMED "HIZUMI."
INSTEAD, THAT PUT THE BLADE CHILDREN AT A HIGHER RISK OF BEING MASSACRED.
AND IF HE WAS PLANNING ON HAVING EVERYONE KILLED IN THE END ANYWAY, THERE'D BE NO POINT IN HIM INVENTING "AYUMU-KUN" FOR HIMSELF.
KACHA (CLICK)
KACHA
...THERE'S NO WAY ONE COULD BE AN IMPOSTOR AND ONE COULD BE AUTHENTIC.
AND...
SCREEN: RECEIVING E-MAIL

IF ONLY AYUMU-KUN IS A REAL ONE, THEN THE CHANCES OF THE CHILDREN BEING SAVED INCREASES...
...AND KIYOTAKA WOULDN'T BE GOING OUT OF HIS WAY TO CRUSH HIM.
IF ONLY HIZUMI IS A GENUINE "LITTLE BROTHER," THEN YAIBA'S HORROR STORY MERELY REPEATS ITSELF.
KIYOTAKA MUST NOT BE ABLE TO STOP HIZUMI BECAUSE IF HE COULD, HE'D HAVE DONE SO ALREADY.
IT MAKES THE MOST SENSE FOR BOTH OF THEM TO BE THE REAL THING.
WHEN HE WAS THIRTEEN, HE SKIPPED A GRADE IN THE U.S. TO GET INTO COLLEGE.
AND IF I'M NOT MISTAKEN, THAT COLLEGE...
KII
KII (CREAK)
HUH?
ACTUALLY, SPEAKING OF HIZUMI ...
BUT IS IT JUST LIKE AYUMU-KUN SAID...?
IS IT TRUE THAT HIZUMI HAS SOMETHING UP HIS SLEEVE...?
BOXES: AYUMU / HIZUMI

KATA (CLICK)
KATA
GABA (LEAP)
...WAS FAMOUS FOR GENETIC RESEARCH, WASN'T IT!?


DNA ANALYSIS?

YEAH, I ASKED HER.
IS SOMETHING WRONG WITH THAT?
KACHA (CLICK)
NO.
JUST THAT WE DON'T KNOW IF THE RESULTS WILL LEAVE YOU PARALYZED, YOU SEE?
DON'T CONFUSE ME WITH YOU.
KATA (CLACK)
I'M AS USED TO "DESPAIR" AS YOU CAN GET.
MORE IMPORTANTLY...
...I NEED TO ASK YOU SOMETHING...
TON (THNK)
I HATE HASSLES.
I KNOW.
MM-HM.
...HIZUMI.

SO WOULD YOU JUST TELL ME...
...WHAT YOUR "DESPAIR" IS?
...THAT'S ASKIN' A BIT MUCH.
SFX: PATA (SWING) PATA
WELL, IF I TOLD YOU FLAT OUT WHAT IT WAS, I'D BE THE ONE WHO GETS DESTROYED WHILE THE REST OF YOU ARE SAVED.
JUU (SIZZLE)
YOU THINK MY "DESPAIR" IS YOUR "HOPE," RIGHT?
HYO! (YOINK)
AND I'M NOT THE KIND OF HERO WHO'D GLADLY KICK THE BUCKET FOR EVERYONE ELSE, YOU SEE?

BUT IF THINGS CONTINUE THIS WAY, EVERYONE GETS KILLED, REMEMBER?
SO YOU'RE SAYIN' I SHOULD SACRIFICE MYSELF?
THAT'S MIGHTY BRUTAL.
...COME ON...
...DO YOU REALLY THINK I'M PLANNING ON DESERTING YOU NOW OR EVER?
KACHIN (CLINK)
LISTEN.

WHAT I WANT ISNT THE "HOPE" THAT I COULD GET FROM YOUR "DESPAIR."
BUT IF I DON'T KNOW ALL THE FACTS, HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO CHANGE FATE?
UNLESS I KNOW WHAT OUR FATE'S LOOKING FOR...
...I CAN'T EVEN BEGIN TO RESIST IT.
THAT'S JUST A LEAD FOR ME, NOTHING MORE.
THE WHEELS OF FATE HAVEN'T STARTED TURNING YET.
DON'T WALLOW IN DESPAIR FOREVER.
...SO TALK TO ME ...
... HIZUMI.
I'M GOING TO FIND YOU YOUR "HOPE!"

AYUMU ...
...YOU HONESTLY ...
...PLAN ON BEATIN' KIYOTAKA?
YEP ...
GATA (CLATTER)
BECAUSE THAT'S PROBABLY ...
...THE ONLY WAY I CAN CHANGE FATE.
DON'T PLAN ANYTHING STUPID.
JOIN ME IN MY FIGHT.
.....
IF THAT'S HOW IT IS, THEN...
.....

...HOW MANY TIMES DO YOU INTEND TO BEAT HIM?
KACHIRI (CLINK)
YOU'RE STRONG NOW.
BUT THAT STRENGTH IS THE STRENGTH OF SOMEONE WHO HAS NOTHING.

JUST AS YOU'VE BEEN WATCHIN' ME...
...I'VE ALSO BEEN WATCHIN' YOU.
WHAYEVER YOU MAY TELL YOURSELF, YOU'RE JUST RUNNIN' AWAY FROM HAPPINESS.
NO MATTER HOW HARD PEOPLE TRY TO GET CLOSE TO YOU, YOU ALWAYS SECLUDE YOURSELF.
YOU DON'T EVEN TRY TO GRAB AHOLD OF THINGS THAT COULD BE YOURS.
AT FIRST GLANCE, YOU SEEM COOL AND COMPOSED, BUT...
...THAT'S NOT THE CASE AT ALL.
YOU'RE JUST AFRAID OF HAPPINESS. THAT'S ALL.
ALL YOUR LIFE, YOU'VE HAD EVERYTHIN' RIPPED AWAY FROM YOU BY KIYOTAKA.
IF YOU WEREN'T CAREFUL WITH THE FRIENDS YOU MADE OR THE THINGS YOU VALUED, HE TOOK THEM AWAY.
ONCE YOU TRIED TO BELIEVE IN SOMETHIN', IT BETRAYED YOU SAVAGELY.
TO AVOID HAVIN' TO SUFFER...
...AND EASE THE FEAR OF LOSIN' ANYTHIN' MORE...
...YOU'VE TRIED TO BE UNHAPPY FROM THE VERY START.
PITA (PAUSE)

IT'S THE MOST PATHETIC WAY TO LIVE A LIFE.
...BUT SOMEBODY WITH NOTHIN' TO LOSE...
...AND NO CONVICTIONS IS UNSHAKABLE.
IF YOUR POCKETS ARE EMPTY, YOU DON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT BEIN' ROBBED.
SO YOU SEE, YOU HAVE NOTHIN' TO FEAR NOW.
IF YOU DON'T BELIEVE IN ANYTHIN', THERE'S NO DANGER OF BEIN' LET DOWN.
YOU'RE WORKIN' WITH A BLANK SLATE.
JUUU (SIZZLE)
THAT'S A SORT OF STRENGTH, I GUESS.

PATAN (SHUT)
...WHAT DO YOU DO AFTER YOU'VE WON?
GACHA (KLATCH)
.....
SU (LIFT)
... BUT ...
AND YOU MIGHT EVEN WIN AGAINST KIYOTAKA.
YOU'LL HAVE GOTTEN BACK WHAT'S IMPORTANT TO YOU AND BE HAPPY.
BUT WINNIN' ALSO MEANS YOU'LL HAVE YOURSELF A WHOLE HEAP OF THINGS YOU'LL HAVE TO PROTECT.
IF YOU FAIL, YOU'LL HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT LOSIN' THOSE THINGS.
IT'S A CATCH-22...

THE SOURCE OF YOUR STRENGTH WILL BE GONE, SEE?
WELL?
PATA (PAT)
IN THAT SITUATION, CAN YOU BEAT KIYOTAKA AGAIN?
JUST BECAUSE YOU BEAT HIM ONCE ...
...DOESN'T MEAN HE'S GOIN' TO GIVE UP, GET IT?
KIYOTAKA BELIEVES IN HIS OWN RIGHTEOUS-NESS.
IF YOU ALTER FATE, HE'LL CHANGE IT YET AGAIN...
...AND CONFRONT YOU HOWEVER MANY TIMES IT TAKES TO GET IT BACK TO HOW IT WAS.

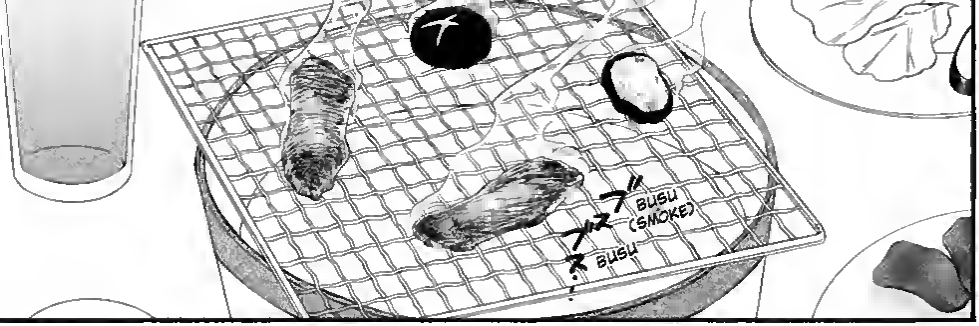
YOU'LL HAVE TO BATTLE WITH HIM OVER IT UNTIL THE DAY YOU DIE.
CAN YOU CONTINUE WINNIN' AGAINST KIYOTAKA?
EVEN IF YOU RECOVER WHAT'S IMPORTANT TO YOU FROM KIYOTAKA...
...CAN YOU MANAGE TO PROTECT ALL THAT HAPPINESS WHEN YOU'RE JUST NOT USED TO IT?

IT'S IMPOSSIBLE ...
IN THE END...
...YOU'LL INEVITABLY LOSE TO KIYOTAKA.
AND EVEN IF THERE ARE TIMES YOU WIN...
...IT'S A FACT THAT IN THE END, YOU WON'T BE LEFT WITH ANY OF THE THINGS YOU WERE TRYIN' TO PROTECT.
SO...
...IF THERE'S SOMETHIN' YOU REALLY WANT TO GRAB HOLD OF...
...THE MOMENT YOU WIN ...
...YOU CAN'T HESITATE TO...

...KILL KIYOTAKA.
...A CORPSE CAN'T STEAL ANYTHIN'.
AND YOU'LL GET TO SPEND THE REST OF YOUR LIFE FREE FROM FEAR OF KIYOTAKA.

I CAN'T SAVE THE BLADE CHILDREN WITH THE SAME HAND THAT'S KILLED MY BROTHER.
YOU'VE GOT IT ALL BACKWARD.
GOTO (CLUNK)
BUT IF YOU LOSE TO KIYOTAKA, YOU WON'T BE ABLE TO SAVE THE CHILDREN.
GATA (CLATTER)
THERE'S NO USE ARGUIN'.
YOU WON'T BE ABLE TO SAVE ANYONE.
THIS BATTLE YOU'RE WAGIN' IS MEANINGLESS.

YOU SHOULD BE JOININ' ME IN MY FIGHT.
THE WAY YOU'RE DOIN' THINGS NOW WON'T GET YOU ANYTHIN'.
...DON'T KID ME.
EVEN SO...
...I'M NOT ABOUT TO GIVE UP.


BUSU
(SMOKE)
BUSU

I'M BEGGING YOU. DON'T DO ANYTHING STUPID YET.
...THE TIME HAS COME.
HIZUM!...

...IN THIS DARKNESS ...
I...
NO MATTER WHAT YOU DO NOW...
AYUMU.
...WILL SHOW YOU I CAN OFFER SALVATION.
... YOU CAN'T PUSH AWAY THE DARK-NESS ...

THE NEXT DAY AFTER SCHOOL.
PITA (FREEZE)
LATELY YOU'VE ONLY PLAYED FOR THE GIRLS IN CLASS.
ぬぅ?
NU (LOOM)
WHAT'RE YOU DOING HERE BY YOURSELF?
...HEH.
...NO MATTER HOW MANY PEOPLE I'M SURROUNDED BY...
...I'LL ALWAYS BE ALONE.
?
PATAN (SHUT)
TOGE (PRICK)
TOGE
PRACTICING IN PRIVATE TO GAIN EVEN MORE POPULARITY, ARE YOU?

IF YOU TAKE TOO LONG, IT'LL EXPIRE.
UWAAAH!
ABOUT THAT...
BUT ANYWAY.
TELL ME YOUR WISH ALREADY.
I'VE GOT A PRETTY LONG LIST GOING, BUT...
...I FEEL LIKE THEY ALL SHOW A DECIDED LACK OF DESTRUCTIVE POWER...
HMMM...
WHAT'S DESCTRUC-TIVE POWER GOT TO DO WITH YOUR WISH?
AND ALSO, I'M NOT GOING TO DRINK MILK THROUGH MY NOSE.
HMM ... WHAT TO DO ...
.....
UHH...
THEN HOW ABOUT YOU SUCK UOON NOODLES THROUGH IT...
SERIOUSLY, WHY DOES IT HAVE TO BE ALONG THE LINES OF A NASTY JOKE LIKE THAT?

?
DID YOU SAY SOMETHING?
...
NOPE.
GATA (CLACK)
DAMN THAT HIZUMI ...
BOSO (MUTTER)
THERE'S SOMETHING I DON'T WANT TO LOSE NOW EITHER...
BY THE WAY, WHERE'S HIZUMI?
I HAVEN'T SEEN HIM SINCE CLASS LET OUT...

KATA (CLACK)
カ？
PIKURI (TWITCH)
ピクリ
CATS COLLECTION
THAT'S ODD.
THE GUARDS DON'T MAKE THEIR ROUNDS AT THIS TIME.
AND I'D BE NOTIFIED OF ANY VISITORS VIA THE INTERCOM FIRST.
PI! (BEEP)
ピ!
KII (CREAK)
PATAN (SHUT)
パタン

GU (GRIP)
TAN
TAN
PI!
TAN (TMP)
LONG TIME NO SEE.
HYOKO (POP)
KANON HILBERT.

HIZUMI ...
HOWDY.
...MIZU-SHIRO!?
GATA (CLATTER)
...HOW DID YOU GET IN HERE?
...I MEAN ...
...I SUPPOSE I'M OVERLOOKING THE QUESTION OF WHY YOU'RE HERE?
NOW, NOW.
LET'S SAVE THE DETAILS FOR LATER.
.....
...WHAT?
WON'T YOU LISTEN TO THE BUSINESS I'VE GOT WITH YOU FIRST?

SU
(SWISH)

WOULD YOU...
...DIE FOR ME?
.....

Spiral
THE BONDS OF REASONING

SPIRAL

CHAPTER SIXTY-FIVE
TOWARDS ZERO

WOULD YOU...
...DIE FOR ME?

...SO YOU'RE GOING TO KILL ME...?
HEH...
I SEE ...
TO (THNK)
HOW AMUS-ING!!
DA (DASH)
HYU (FWIP)

PASH! (SNATCH)
GA (SMACK)
CHA (CLACK)
DID YOU REALLY THINK YOU COULD KILL ME SO EASILY?

WELL, WELL.
I SHOULDA KNOWN.
SFX: PACHIKURI (BLINK)
すたっ
すた
SUTA (STRUT)
すた
SUTA
I CAME MEANIN' TO KILL YOU, BUT I GUESS IT'S ME WHO'S GONNA END UP DEAD.
...BUT I STILL HAVEN'T BEEN SHOT. WHY IS THAT?
YOU'RE UNEASY ABOUT GETTIN' RID OF ME JUST YET.
YOU WANT TO KNOW WHY...
...AND HOW I GOT HERE.

AM I WRONG?
.....
SO UNTIL YOU FIND OUT, YOU WON'T KILL ME.
I'M NOT AFRAID OF YOU.
GO AHEAD AND ACT THE TOUGH GUY PART.
BOSH (FWUMP)
IF EITHER AYUMU OR I TRIED TO TAKE YOU ON HEAD-ON, WE WOULDN'T BE ANY MATCH.
BUT WE COULD THINK UP SOMETHIN' TO AVOID GETTIN' IN THAT SITUATION.
.....
I'LL ANSWER ALL YOUR QUESTIONS, OKAY?
WHY DON'T YOU TAKE A SEAT?

GORI (GRIND)
MU (UMPH)
SUTA (STRUT)
SUTA
YOU'RE NOT GONNA SHOOT ME, SO WHAT'S THE DEAL?
FOR CRYING OUT LOUD.
THAT HURTS!
ANSWER MY QUESTIONS.
QUIT YOUR BLABBERING.

ONLY A SELECT FEW KNOW THAT I'M IN THIS FACILITY.
GETTING IN, LET ALONE REACHING MY ROOM, REQUIRES TWO TO THREE LEVELS OF CLEARANCE.
JUST OPENING THE LOCK ON THE DOOR REQUIRES A SPECIAL KEY AND SEVEN-DIGIT PIN.
PLUS, WE'RE BEING RECORDED THIS VERY MINUTE.
SO HOW IS IT YOU CAME WALTZING IN HERE LIKE IT'S NOTHING?

...AND HOW DID YOU GET CLEAR-ANCE?
THAT'S 'COS I GOT THE CLEARANCE I NEEDED...
...ALONG WITH THE KEY AND PIN.
KIYOTAKA GAVE IT TO ME.
HE SAID IT WAS OKAY FOR ME TO KILL YOU.

...WHICH ONLY RAISES MORE QUESTIONS FOR YOU, RIGHT?
WHY DID KIYOTAKA GIVE ME THAT PERMISSION?
YOU'RE THINKIN' THERE CAN'T POSSIBLY BE A REASON FOR ME TO KILL YOU.
YOU'RE IN THE SAFEST PLACE OF ALL THE BLADE CHILDREN, AND NO ONE'S WORRIED ABOUT YOU COMMITTIN' SUICIDE.
SO WHY SHOULD YOU BE KILLED?
BE QUIET!
GU (SHOVE)

...ARE THE TRUE "LITTLE BROTHERS" OF "GOD" AND "THE DEVIL"...
...AND AT THE SAME TIME, WE ARE FALSE "LITTLE BROTHERS."
...THAT'S WHAT I'M SAYING.
THE FATE YOU'RE FACIN' IS INCOMPLETE AND NOT VERY PRETTY.
GUI (PUSH)
IN A PERFECT SCENARIO ...
...I'D KILL YOU OUT OF SOME NECESSITY.
WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT!?
WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO SAY!?
...AYUMU AND I...

CHA (CLINK)
RUTH-KUN.
WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT IT?
SO WHILE HIZUMI WAS IN COLLEGE ...
...HE WAS INVOLVED IN GENETIC RESEARCH, YOU SAY?
KO (TAP)
KO
...WHAT AYUMU NARUMI POINTED OUT DOES INDEED WEIGH ON MY MIND.
IT'S A FACT THAT HE MAJORED IN IT...
...AND IT SEEMS HIS RESEARCH DID YIELD SOME RESULTS.
SOUNDS LIKE RATHER VAGUE INFORMATION.

FOR WHATEVER REASON, ALL THE DETAILS ARE BEING KEPT UNDER WRAPS BY THE COLLEGE.
EVEN AT MY LEVEL OF AUTHORITY, I COULDN'T TOUCH ANYTHING.
BUT IF THEY HAVE SOMETHING TO HIDE, THEY COULD'VE JUST LINED UP SOME PRETTY LITTLE LIES AND AT LEAST COME FORWARD WITH SOMETHING TO AVOID LOOKING SUSPICIOUS.
THE WAY THEY'RE DOING THINGS, I CAN'T HELP BUT THINK I'M BEING INVITED TO SNIFF SOMETHING OUT.
IS THIS SOME KIND OF TRAP...?
NO... MAYBE IT'S DATA THEY WISH TO CONCEAL FOR A GIVEN TIME?
WHAT ABOUT YOUR ARRANGE-MENTS FOR TESTING HIZUMI AND AYUMU NARUMI'S DNA?

I'VE SECURED A FACILITY THAT HAS ALL THE NECESSARY EQUIPMENT.
I'D LIKE TO AVOID RELYING ON SOMEONE ELSE ONLY TO HAVE KIYOTAKA MEDDLE, SO...
SU (LIFT)
...I'M GOING TO RUN THE TEST MYSELF.
.....
BOX: AYUMU
...REGARDLESS OF WHETHER THE TWO ARE "LITTLE BROTHERS" OR NOT...
...THERE'S MEANING IN CHECKING.
OR THERE'S A POSSIBILITY ...
KOTO (CLACK)
...KIYOTAKA STILL ISN'T TELLING US THEIR TRUE FATE.

IN THIS BLUEPRINT, EVERYTHING IS PERFECTLY PLACED WHERE IT OUGHT TO BE, WITH NO GAPS AT ALL...
...HOW COULD ANYONE DENY THAT?
THAT'S JUST IT.
BUT HOW CAN THEIR FATES CHANGE?
IF THERE WAS EVEN THE TINIEST GAP OR KINK, WE WOULDN'T HAVE GIVEN UP.
FREE OF GAPS.
PERFECT.
THAT'S WHAT MAKES OUR FATE EVEN MORE CONCRETE.
NO MATTER HOW HARD YOU TRY TO ESCAPE IT, ALL PATHS LEAD RIGHT BACK TO THIS DEFINITIVE BLUEPRINT.
KOTO
THAT REALITY ROBS US OF ANY HOPE.
WE ALL CAN'T HELP BUT BELIEVE IN OUR FATE.

...IS THE FATE WE KNOW OF NOW...
GATA (CLATTER)
BUT ...
...REALLY THAT NEAT AND TIDY?
...TRUE AND FALSE ...?

THAT'S PRECISELY WHY I NEED YOU DEAD.
THAT'S RIGHT.
...NEITHER AYUMU NOR I CAN KEEP THINGS UP LIKE THEY'VE BEEN GOIN'.
IF I KILL YOU...
AND SO LONG AS AYUMU REFUSES TO CHOOSE ...
...HE'LL ONLY DIE A MEANINGLESS DEATH, THROWN TO THE BOTTOM OF A PITCH-BLACK PIT.
GA (GRAB)
EITHER HE KILLS ME...
...OR HE SIDES WITH ME.
EVEN IF HE DOESN'T LIKE IT, AYUMU'S GONNA HAVE TO MAKE A CHOICE.

...OR NOTHIN'.
IT'S ALL...
IF AYUMU CHOOSES TO SIDE WITH ME, I WIN.
EVEN IF HE KILLS ME, I STILL WIN.
...AND IN EITHER SCENARIO, AYUMU WON'T GET THE RESULTS HE'S HOPIN' FOR, OR ANY VICTORY, FOR THAT MATTER.
I'M FINE WITH WHATEVER HE CHOOSES.
IF I HAVE TO THINK OF THESE LONELY DAYS OF DECAY CONTINUIN' ON MUCH LONGER...
...I'D BE MORE THAN HAPPY TO HAVE AYUMU KILL ME RIGHT AWAY.

THEN HOW'S YOUR CURRENT FATE SUPPOSED TO CHANGE?
WHY ARE YOU IN SUCH A HURRY TO BLOCK THE BLADE CHILDREN'S ROUTE TO SALVATION?
BA (YANK)
CHA (CLACK)
...I DON'T UNDER-STAND.
...BUT, HEY.
I'LL TELL YOU SOME-THIN'.
I DON'T GIVE A DAMN WHAT HAPPENS TO YOU GUYS.
AYUMU AND I...
...ARE ACTUALLY ...

GURA (SWAY)
DON (BLUMP)
GASHAN (CRASH)
...IT CAN'T BE.

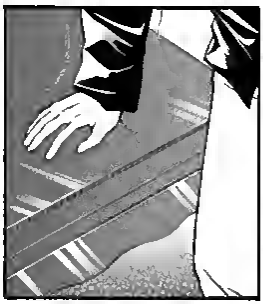
I GET IT NOW ...
WHAT KIYOTAKA'S AFTER IN THE VERY END IS...
THEN THAT MEANS AYUMU-KUN IS...
EVEN THE BEST OUTCOME OF ALL THIS...
...IS NULL ...!

YOU WERE SO BENT ON DYIN' FROM THE START.
SU (SWISH)
SO THERE'S NO REASON TO TRY TO STAY ALIVE NOW, IS THERE?
LOOKS LIKE YOU FINALLY UNDERSTAND.
CHA (CLACK)
NOW THE DESPAIR OF EVERYONE ON THE BOARD IS SET IN STONE.

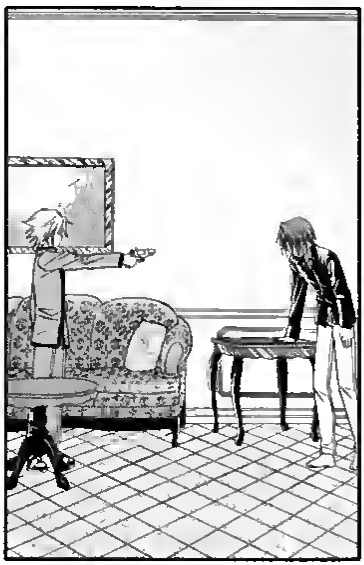
"NEAT AND TIDY"?
...HM.
BUT IT IS, YOU SEE?
YAIBA AND KIYOTAKA.
AYUMU-KUN AND HIZUMI.
AND THE BLADE CHILDREN ARE HERE TO HELP AYUMU-KUN MATURE.
THERE'S NO WIGGLE ROOM IN ANY OF THESE RELATIONSHIPS, NO WASTE.
IF KIYOTAKA KILLED YAIBA...
...AND AYUMU-KUN KILLS HIZUMI...
...AND THEN WE KILL ALL THE BLADE CHILDREN, THIS WHOLE BUSINESS WILL BE BROUGHT TO A CLOSE.
THESE UNNATURAL FORCES WOULD BE CLEARED FROM THE FACE OF THE PLANET AND EVERYTHING WOULD RETURN TO HOW IT WAS.
THAT'S WHAT I CALL A NEAT AND TIDY ENDING.
...NOT NECES-SARILY.

...KIYOTAKA AND AYUMU NARUMI.
THAT WON'T MAKE THE WORLD GO BACK TO THE WAY IT WAS.
IN THE CURRENT SETUP, THOSE TWO "GODS" WOULD REMAIN AS THEY ARE.
...AND ALL THE BLADE CHILDREN ARE ERADICATED, TWO ALIEN EXISTENCES WILL STILL REMAIN.
AFTER AYUMU NARUMI KILLS HIZUMI...
WHO KNOWS WHAT COULD HAPPEN.
IF LEFT ALIVE, THEY'D HAVE CONSIDERABLE INFLUENCE ON THE WORLD.
AND WITH NO MORE "DEVILS" FOR THEM TO BEAT, THEY'D BE DONE WITH THEIR DUTIES.
THOSE TWO WOULD MERELY BECOME A NEW PAIR OF DANGEROUS SUPERNATURAL FORCES.

SO WOULDN'T YOU THINK THAT FATE ...
...WOULD HAVE PREPARED SOMETHING TO MAKE SURE THOSE TWO ARE ALSO DISPOSED OF IN THE END?



GYU!
CLENCH



I'LL KILL YOU NICE 'N' CLEAN, SO YOU SUFFER AS LITTLE AS POSSIBLE.
...I GUESS YOU'VE PREPARED YOURSELF FOR WHAT'S TO COME.
...I'M READY.
WHAT DID YOU SAY?
BUT NOT OUT OF DESPAIR.
...I'LL ADMIT I'VE NEVER FELT A DESPAIR AS DEEP AS THIS.

TO BE HONEST, I DON'T SEE ANY REASON TO RESIST YOU.
I ALMOST WANT YOU TO KILL ME.
BUT IF I DIED HERE SPEAKING ONLY OF DESPAIR...
...AYUMU-KUN WOULD BE LEFT WITH NOTHING.
I'M WEAK.
BUT AYUMU-KUN'S DIFFERENT.
I DON'T HAVE FAITH IN HIM, BUT...
...HE MIGHT SEE SOMETHING THAT I CAN'T.

SO EVEN IF IT'S AN ILLUSION OR A FABRICATION...
...I HAVE TO DIE IN A WAY THAT LEAVES HIM SOME "HOPE."
...IT'S NO USE TRYIN' TO ACT FEARLESS NOW.
YOU'RE JUST MAKIN' A DISGRACE OF YOURSELF.
I DON'T CARE IF IT'S DISGRACEFUL.
BUT, HIZUMI...
...YOU SHOULD HEAR THIS.
ONCE YOU'VE KILLED SOMEONE, YOU CAN'T UNDO IT.
AFTER THIS...
...NO MATTER HOW MUCH YOU REGRET IT, YOU CAN NEVER GO BACK TO HOW YOU WERE BEFORE YOU KILLED ME.
EVEN IF THE PATH YOU'VE CHOSEN IS A MISTAKE...
...YOU CAN'T GO BACK AND MAKE THINGS RIGHT.

NO MATTER WHAT HE DOES, HE'LL ONLY BE BROUGHT BACK TO WHERE HIS DESTINY LIES.
AYUMU CAN'T RUN AWAY.
THIS IS THE ABSOLUTE PATH FATE SHOWED ME.
I'M NOT MAKING A MISTAKE.
I'VE CHECKED AND DOUBLE-CHECKED.
AND AYUMU'S INSTINCTS SHOULD BE TELLIN' HIM THE SAME THING.
...INDEED
BUT EVEN SO, WHETHER AYUMU-KUN LOSES TO HIS FATE OR NOT, EVERYTHING DEPENDS ON HIS WILL.
NO, AYUMU WILL ADMIT DEFEAT.
IF HE DOESN'T ACCEPT HIS FATE, HE REALLY WILL BE FINISHED.
ONCE HE DEFIES FATE, ALL THAT AWAITS HIM...
...IS A DARKNESS AND SOLITUDE THAT HE CAN NEVER ESCAPE.

HE WILL HAVE THE OPTION TO CONTINUE ON IN THE DARKNESS.
BUT THERE WILL STILL BE A CHOICE TO MAKE.
IT'S TRUE THAT IF AYUMU-KUN DENIES HIS FATE...
...HE'LL BE TRAPPED IN DARKNESS FOR THE REST OF HIS LIFE AND LEFT TO ROT ALONE.
HIS WILL MAY PROMPT HIM TO DO JUST THAT.
...AYUMU-KUN WILL LEAVE YOU BEHIND, ALL ALONE, UNABLE TO UNDO WHAT YOU'VE DONE.
IF HE DOESN'T GO FOR THE CONVENIENT CONSOLATION YOU OFFER OR JOIN YOUR HURRY INTO RUIN AND INSTEAD CHOOSES HIS OWN PATH...
YOU'LL BE THE ONE TRAPPED IN DARKNESS FOR THE REST OF YOUR LIFE.

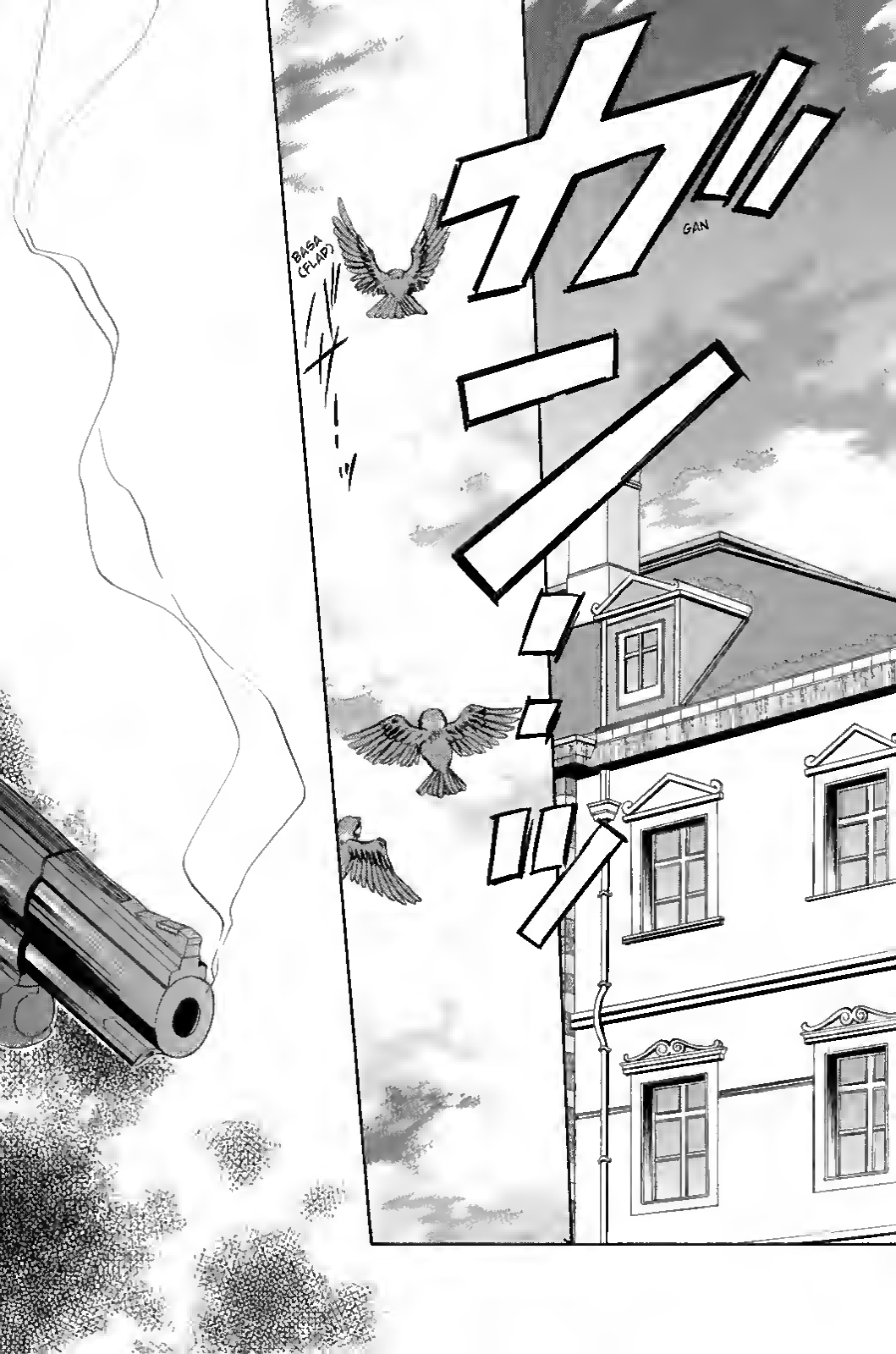
YOU'LL LOSE.
I'M SURE EYES WOULD REBUKE ME FOR THROWING AWAY MY LIFE SO EASILY.
BUT MY DEATH LAYS THE FOUNDATION FOR YOUR DEFEAT.
...SO I'M GOING TO DIE HERE AND NOW.
IF YOU LOSE, THE ROUTE TO SALVATION WILL STILL BE OPEN.
WITH WHAT THEY CALL "HOPE."
AND EVEN IF HE DOES WIN, THE BLADE CHILDREN CAN'T BE SAVED!
ENOUGH! I'M GONNA WIN!
AYUMU'S THE ONE WHO'LL LOSE!
WHEN PEOPLE ARE TRAPPED IN DARKNESS AND LEFT TO ROT, NOBODY CAN SAVE THEM!

AND THERE'S NO REASON TO CHOOSE DARKNESS.
AYUMU CAN ONLY LOSE!!
HUFF...
...I PITY YOU...
...HIZUMI.
YOU STILL ...
GA (GRAB)
...WANT ONLY TO BE SAVED.
SHUT UP! KANON HILBERT!!

TAKE IT...
...AYUMU-KUN.
THIS IS...
...YOUR "HOPE."

GAN
BASA (FLAP)
GAN (BLAM)
GAN
GAN
PI (SPLAT)
GAN
GAN

GAN (BLAM)
GAN
GAN
PJ (SPLAT)
GAN
GAN


GAN
BASA (FLAP)

Y-YOU THINK TOO MUCH...

THAT WILL REVERT EVERYTHING BACK TO NORMAL.
BUT DO YOU THINK THIS RIDICULOUS WEB OF FATE...
...WOULD ALLOW THEIR NATURAL LIFESPANS TO BRING THIS ORDEAL TO AN END?
FATE'S PREPARED SOMETHING TO ENSURE KIYOTAKA AND AYUMU-KUN ARE DISPOSED OF?
WHEN IT COMES DOWN TO IT, THOSE TWO ARE FLESH AND BLOOD.
GIVEN THE LIMITS OF MORTALITY, THEY'RE BOUND TO FADE FROM THE FACE OF THE PLANET EVENTUALLY.
PURURURURU (BRRRRING)
プルルルル...
プルルルル
PURURURURU
プルルルル
PURURURURU
PIKU (TWITCH)
プルルルル
PURURURURU
...WHAT?
GYAA
GYAA (CAW)
DID SOMETHING HAPPEN OVER THERE?

...HUH?
HE'S BEEN KILLED BY HIZUMI ...?
HIRA (FLUTTER)
ヒラ
...HUH?
KANON-KUN...

Spiral
THE BONDS OF REASONING

SPIRAL

CHAPTER SIXTY-SIX
THE LOST WORLD

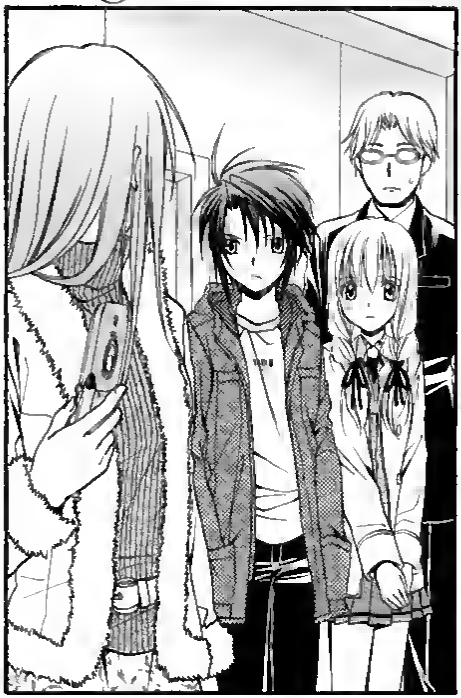
...JUST WHEN I THOUGHT YOU WERE ASKING ME OUT TODAY...
HAA (SIGH)
はあ
...IT'S ONLY TO HELP CLEAN OUT YOUR FRIDGE.
I'M RUNNING LOW ON SPACE.
HIZUMI WASN'T THINKING YESTERDAY AND ONLY BOUGHT MEAT.
パコ
PAKO (POP)
WHAT WERE YOU EXPECTING?
OH, NOTHING.
SOMETIMES I WONDER IF A LITTLE ROMANCE WON'T BLOSSOM, IS ALL.

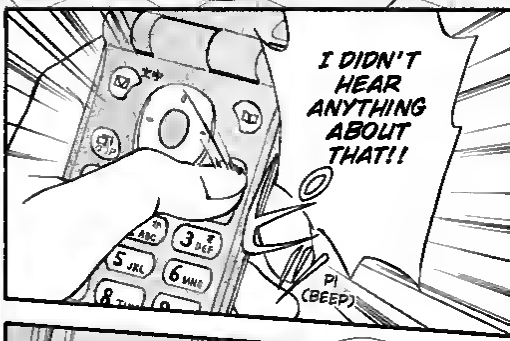
ME, WITH YOU?
MY TASTE ISN'T THAT AWFUL.
AH.
THIS TOFU'S ABOUT TO GO BAD.
HOW ABOUT YOU FINISH IT OFF FOR ME?
...SOMEHOW HE REALLY KNOWS HOW TO PUSH MY BUTTONS.
MUSUU (MIFFED)
...BUT ANYWAY ...
...HIZUMI-SAN... ...ISN'T HOME YET.
HE'S GOT HIS OWN SCHEDULE.
PURURURURU (BERRING)
プルルルル!
PURURURURU
SORRY.
PURURURURU
COULD YOU GET THAT?
GACHA (CLICK)
HELLO, NARUMI RESIDENCE ...
AH, KIRIE-SAN.

...COME AGAIN?
...I SEE.
...YES.
NA—
NARUMI-SAN!
HM?
WHAT IS IT?
K-KANON-SAN.
HE'S BEEN KILLED BY HIZUMI-SAN...!

HOW CAN YOU NOT TRACE KIYOTAKA!?
I SEE.
PATAN (SHUT)

I KNOW FOR A FACT HE WAS HERE THIS MORNING!
...THEN FIND HIZUMI!
...WHAT?
YOU'VE BEEN RESTRICTED UNDER KIYOTAKA'S ORDERS!?




I DIDN'T HEAR ANYTHING ABOUT THAT!!
PI (BEEP)

THIS IS QUITE A FACILITY.
THERE WERE TONS OF CHECKPOINTS JUST TO GET IN.

JUST WHAT KIND OF MANAGEMENT DOES THIS PLACE HAVE?
AND YET HIZUMI WALTZED RIGHT IN, KILLED A MAN, AND GOT OUT SAFELY.
HE LET HIZUMI DO WHATEVER HE WANTED.
THAT MAN ISSUED ORDERS AHEAD OF TIME.
PATAN! (SHUT)
...IT'S KIYOTAKA.
...I SEE.
AND MY BROTHER'S ORDERS HAVE POWER.

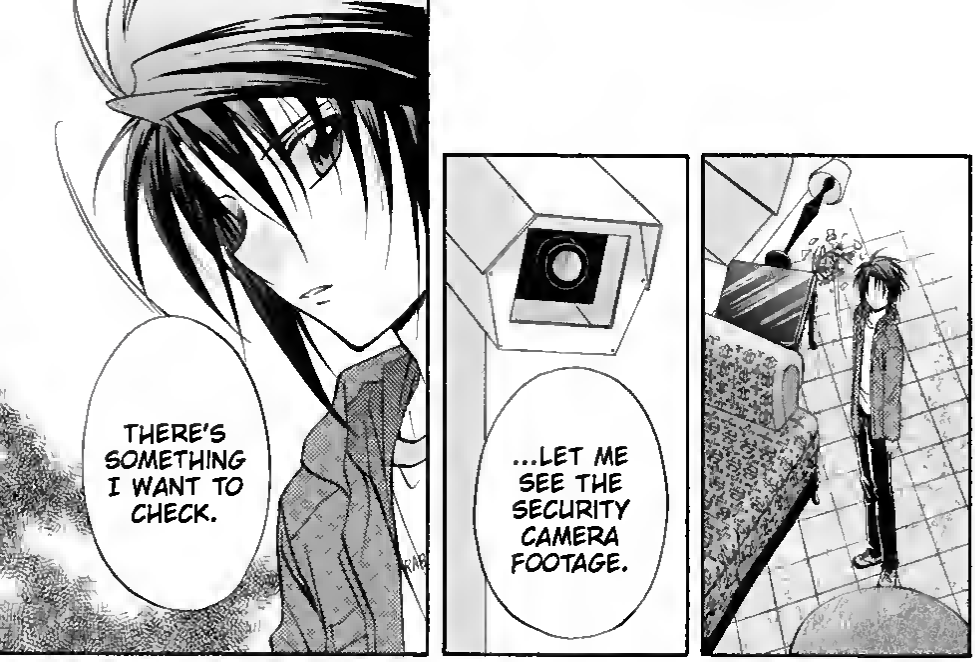
KACHIN (SNAP)
WHAT?
ARE YOU ANGRY OR SOME-THING?
YOU'RE SURE HIZUMI DID IT?
YEAH.
HE WAS RECORDED BY THE SECURITY CAMERAS.
HOW CAN YOU ACT SO CALM ABOUT THIS!?
GUI (YANK)

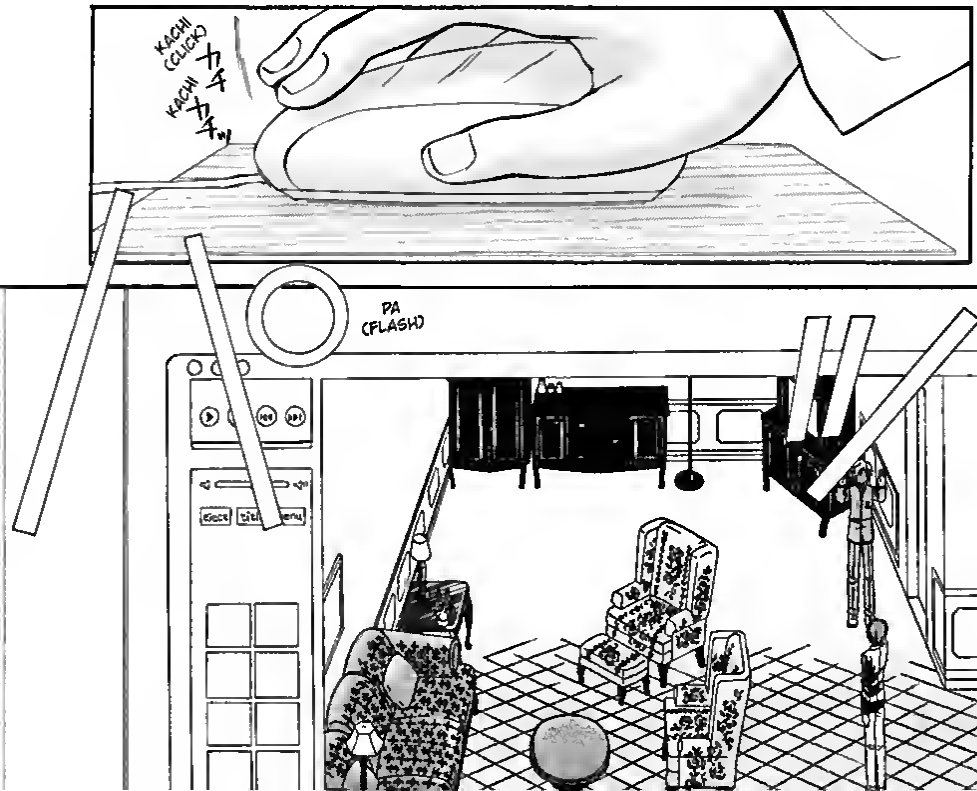
YOU TOOK A BULLET TO SAVE KANON-KUN, AND NOW HE'S DEAD, DON'T YOU SEE!?
AND BY NONE OTHER THAN YOUR GOOD BUDDY HIZUMI!!
WHY'D YOU EVEN SAVE KANON-KUN THEN!?
WHILE YOU LET HIZUMI OFF THE LEASH!?
IF YOU'D JUST KILLED HIZUMI RIGHT AWAY—
YOU'RE NOT MAKING ANY SENSE, YOU KNOW THAT?

KA (FLUSH)
IF I'D KILLED HIZUMI RIGHT OFF THE BAT...
...YOU'D HAVE KILLED KANON HILBERT ALONG WITH ALL THE BLADE CHILDREN LONG BEFORE NOW.
BESIDES, YOU GUYS HAVE BEEN TRYING TO KILL KANON HILBERT ALL ALONG, SO YOU HAVE NO RIGHT TO TELL ME ANYTHING.
...SHUT UP...!
DON (SLAM)
WHAT DO YOU KNOW—
STOP IT.

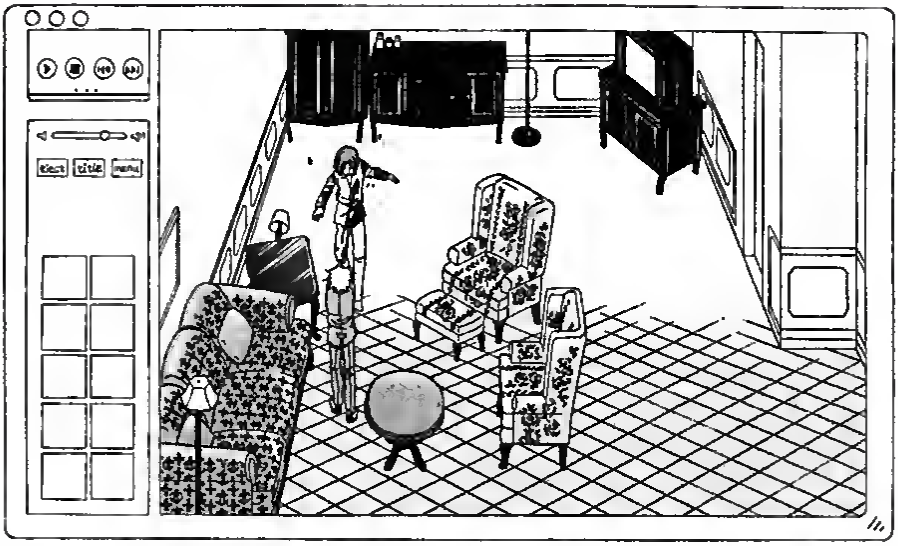
THIS IS NOT THE TIME.
WHAT'S THE MEANING OF THIS...
...AYUMU NARUMI?
WHY WAS KANON KILLED?

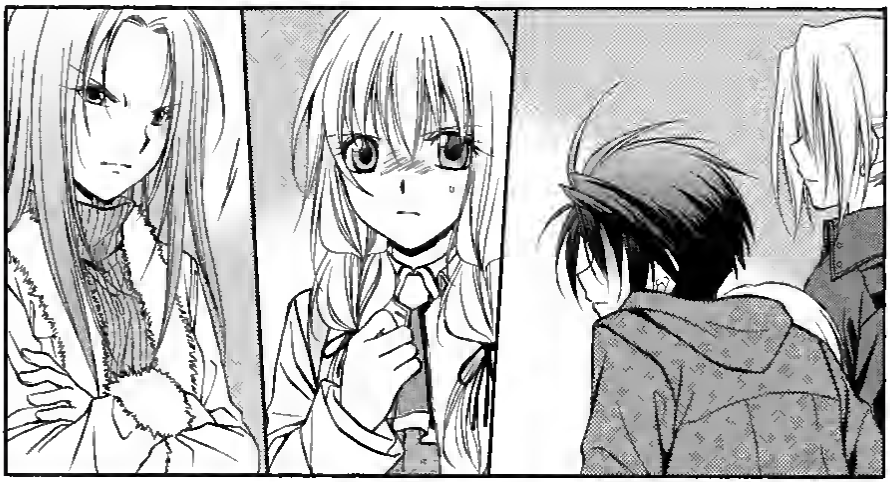
AND WHY DOES IT LOOK LIKE HE DIDN'T PUT UP A STRUGGLE ...
...AND TOOK SIX DIRECT HITS?
.....
...SIX SHOTS AND NO SIGN OF STRUGGLE.
SUTA (STRUT)
SUTA
IN THAT CASE...
SU (SWISH)
...KANON HILBERT'S THE ONE WHO WON.

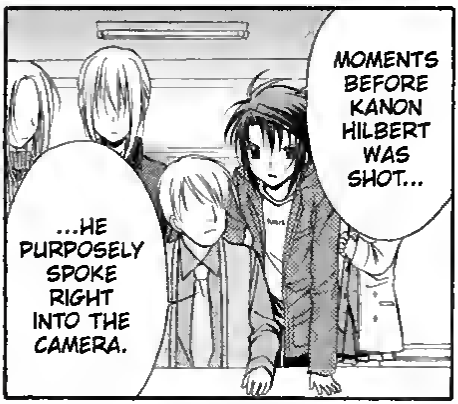

THERE'S SOMETHING I WANT TO CHECK.
...LET ME SEE THE SECURITY CAMERA FOOTAGE.

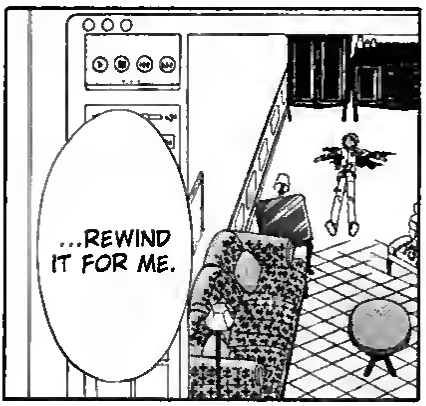

KACHI (CLICK)
KACHI
PA (FLASH)

...KANON HILBERT HAD THE UPPER HAND AT FIRST.
SO HALFWAY THROUGH ...
...HIZUMI SAID SOMETHING TO HIM THAT SHOOK HIM UP.
...IT DIDN'T RECORD ANY SOUND?
IT COULD HAVE, BUT...
...IT SEEMS THAT FUNCTION WAS SWITCHED OFF AT THE TIME.
MY BROTHER'S ORDERS?
AT HIZUMI'S REQUEST TOO, APPARENTLY.
I SEE.
...I IMAGINE IT WOULD'VE BEEN.






MOMENTS BEFORE KANON HILBERT WAS SHOT...
...HE PURPOSELY SPOKE RIGHT INTO THE CAMERA.


...REWIND IT FOR ME.

CAN YOU...
...ZOOM IN ON HIS MOUTH?
PA (FLASH)
KACHI (CLICK)
カチ
PA
PLAY IT AGAIN.
KACHI
カチ
TAKE IT.
AYUMU-KUN.

THIS IS YOUR...
GIRI (GRIP)
WELL, THEN.
I'LL TAKE MY LEAVE.
THANKS.
...I GOT IT.

WHY DID HIZUMI KILL KANON-KUN?
PATAN (SHUT)
パターン!
TELL ME...
...AYUMU-KUN.
NOW HIZUMI AND I CAN'T FACE EACH OTHER CASUALLY.
THE NEXT TIME WE MEET...
...SOME-THING'S GOING TO END, I'M SURE OF IT.
...DOES THAT MEAN...
...YOU'LL KILL HIZUMI-SAN, NARUMI-SAN?

AND IF THAT HAPPENS, I PROBABLY WON'T BE ABLE TO TALK TO YOU GUYS LIKE THIS ANYMORE.
I COULD OPT TO ALLY WITH HIZUMI TOO.
IF I FORGAVE THE ONE WHO KILLED KANON HILBERT...
...YOU WOULD NEVER FORGIVE ME FOR THE REST OF YOUR LIVES.
HIZUMI SIMPLY...
...COULDN'T TAKE THIS UNCERTAINTY ANY LONGER.
EVEN IF IT MEANT BEING KILLED BY ME SOON ...
...HE WAS IN A HURRY TO REACH SOME CONCLUSION.

...IN THE END, HIZUMI...
TA (TAP)
...COULDN'T HANDLE THE PAIN OF FIGHTING AGAINST THE FATE OUTLINED FOR HIM.
JUST WHAT WAS IT HIZUMI SAID TO KANON-KUN?
WHAT IS KIYOTAKA'S REAL GOAL?
GOOD QUESTION.
WE MIGHT FIND OUT IF YOU DO WHAT I ASKED YOU FOR.
NA—
NARUMI-SAN.
...KANON...

...WON AGAINST HIZUMI, DIDN'T HE?
THAT WAS THE ONLY WAY HIZUMI COULD FORCIBLY DENY THE FACT THAT ...
TAKE IT, AYUMU-KUN.
...EVEN SOMEONE LIKE HIZUMI WOULDN'T ACT SO DISGRACE-FULLY AS TO FIRE SIX ROUNDS INTO SOMEBODY JUST TO KILL THEM.
...KANON HILBERT'S DEATH...
THIS IS YOUR...
...WAS CONNECTED TO SOME KIND OF SALVATION FOR YOU GUYS.

EVEN THAT...
...IS ALL A PART OF MY BROTHER'S CALCULA-TIONS.
BUT ...
GACHA (CLACK)
THAT'S RIGHT.

...HOPE.

YOU...

...KNEW THAT EVENTUALLY ...
...THIS WOULD HAPPEN, DIDN'T YOU?

PATAN (SHUT)
...I ONLY HOPED ...
...IT WOULDN'T HAVE TO ...
...EYES-KUN.
I—
GO AND DO WHAT AYUMU NARUMI ASKED OF YOU.
THE KEY LIES IN THAT.

GYU (SQUEEZE)
ISN'T THERE MORE YOU WANT TO SAY?
TO ME?
AND AYUMU-KUN...?
WHAT DO YOU WANT ME TO SAY?
BAKIN (SMASH)

...LM.
...THAT I COULD GET BACK THROUGH WORDS ALONE.
KO
I...
SU (SWSH)
KO (CLICK)
...DON'T REMEMBER EVER HAVING ANYTHING ...
KO

AS FAR AS KANON HILBERT'S DEATH...
...I'LL TAKE RESPON-SIBILITY FOR IT...
PACHIN (CLICK)
PA (FLASH)
WHERE DID THAT SUGGESTION COME FROM?
TONIGHT ...
...SHOULD I STAY OVER AT YOUR PLACE, NARUMI-SAN...?
I'M ALWAYS ALONE.
...I ALREADY TOLD YOU.
AT TIMES LIKE THIS, YOU COULD EASILY SLIP DOWN THE ROUTE OF NEGATIVITY IF YOU'RE LEFT ALONE, SEE?
WELL... IT'S JUST...
...I'LL BE FINE.
.....

WHERE DID THAT SUGGESTION COME FROM?
TONIGHT ...
...SHOULD I STAY OVER AT YOUR PLACE, NARUMI-SAN...?
I'M ALWAYS ALONE.
...I ALREADY TOLD YOU.
WELL... IT'S JUST...
AT TIMES LIKE THIS, YOU COULD EASILY SLIP DOWN THE ROUTE OF NEGATIVITY IF YOU'RE LEFT ALONE, SEE?
...I'LL BE FINE.
.....

AS FAR AS KANON HILBERT'S DEATH...
...I'LL TAKE RESPON-SIBILITY FOR IT...
PACHIN (CLICK)
PA (FLASH)

HIZUMI ...
GOTO (CLUNK)
HE CAME BACK HOME AT SOME POINT.
SU (SWSH)
お前もこれ持っとけ。
それと俺はカノン・ヒルベルトに負けてない。
NOTE: CARRY THIS ON YOU. AND I DIDN'T LOSE TO KANON HILBERT.
GASHA (CLACK)
...IDIOT.
BESIDES, YOU'RE ONLY...
...DOING EXACTLY AS MY BROTHER FORESAW.
HAVING TO SAY THAT MEANS YOU JUST LOST.
KUSHA (CRUSH)
RAGI

BUT...
GO AHEAD AND TAKE WHATEVER YOU WANT FROM ME.
BROTHER... YOU'RE PROBABLY FEELING PRETTY GOOD ABOUT YOURSELF RIGHT NOW.
POTON (PLOP)
HYU (WHIP)
...I SWEAR THAT, IN THE END ...
...I'LL WIPE THAT STUPID SMILE OFF YOUR FACE.
THE NEXT DAY...

KA
THERE'S NO NEED TO DO IT YOURSELF ...
KA CLACK
...I CAN HANDLE A SIMPLE DNA SIBLING VERIFICATION TEST FOR YOU.
TSUCHIYA-SAN...
KA
CAN'T TRUST ANYBODY ...?
I DON'T HAVE ANYTHING TO GAIN FROM MANIPULATING THE DATA...
SORRY.
KA
QUIT TRYING TO PROBE ME.
JUST LEND ME THE EQUIPMENT I NEED.
I CAN'T TRUST ANYBODY RIGHT NOW.
KA
WHAT IS AYUMU SUGGESTING THEY'RE HIDING?

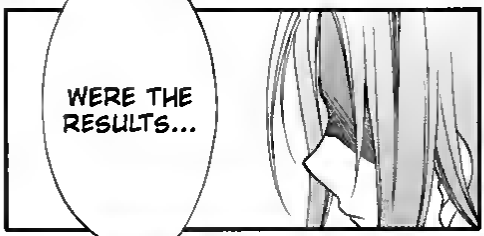
GU (CLENCH)
DOESN'T MATTER
I'LL JUST HAVE TO SEE IT WITH MY VERY OWN EYES!
LABEL: AYUMU
HE'S OUT TODAY.
HE JUST OVERATE, IS ALL.
HUH? WHY, WHAT HAPPENED?
OH?
ZAWA
ZAWA (MURMUR)
WHERE'S HIZUMI-KUN?
ZAWA
ZAWA
AND AFTER I CALCULATED HIS PROPER CALORIE AND NUTRIENT INTAKE.
WASN'T HE JUST REBELLING AGAINST THAT, THEN?
AH HA HA!
HE IGNORED MY WARNINGS AND PIGGED OUT ON A BUNCH OF MEAT.
THAT SOUNDS LIKE HIZUMI-KUN, ALL RIGHT!
THERE'S NOT A HINT OF CHANGE.

HM?
IN WHAT?
I WAS THINKING ...
...YOU'D BE ACTING A LOT MORE DOWN IN THE DUMPS.
YOU, NARUMI-SAN.
AND WHAT DOES BEING "DOWN IN THE DUMPS" ENTAIL?
IT ENTAILS BECOMING INTROVERTED AND DEPRESSED.
...YOU KNOW ...
...IF IT WEREN'T FOR THAT SIDE OF YOU, YOU'D BE PRETTY CUTE.
AND I WAS HOPING TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THAT ...
...TO GET YOU TO OWE ME BIG TIME.

I GUESS... HE ACTUALLY HAS CHANGED?
THERE'S NO CHANGE...
GEHO (COUGH)
AHEM!
...BECAUSE I KNEW FROM THE VERY START...
...THAT I WAS IN SOME BOGUS DREAM.
DREAMS. REALITY.

WHAT I'VE BEEN WATCHING IS MOSTLY A LIE...
...BUT...
...THAT'S ALSO COMING TO AN END.

DID YOU FINISH THE ANALYSIS?


WERE THE RESULTS...

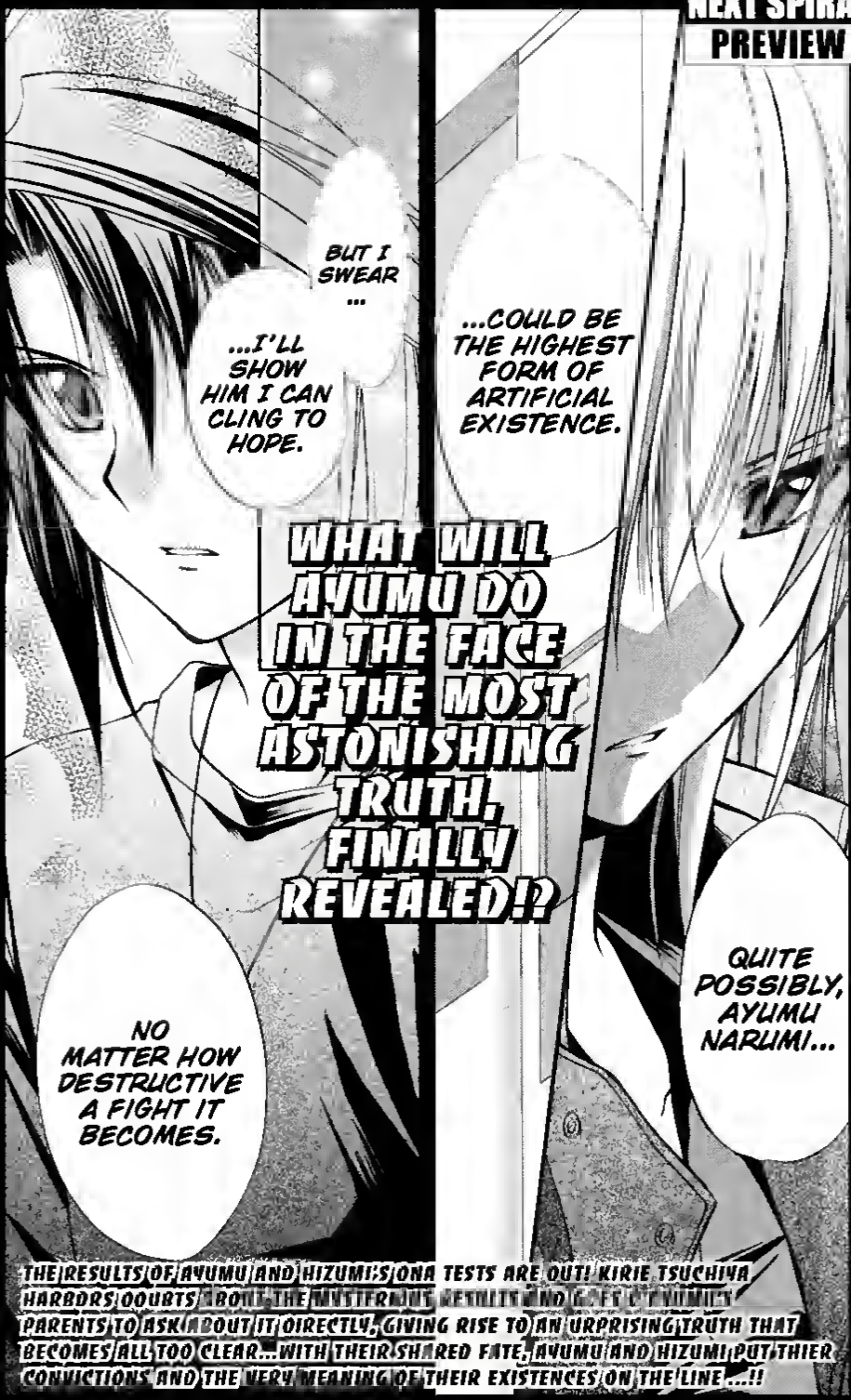
HA (GASP)

AH.
TSUCHIYA-SAN.

...EVEN IF THE DNA SUPPORTS THE FACT THAT THEY'RE SIBLINGS ...
GAKU (TREMBLE)
GAKU
...THIS COULDN'T POSSIBLY BE...!
...WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?
IF THE RESULTS OF THIS ANALYSIS ARE TRUE, THEN...

...KIYOTAKA AND AYUMU-KUN...
...ARE TWINS...!!
Spiral 13 THE END
~BONDS~ REASONING

Spiral
THE BONDS OF REASONING


NEXT SPIRAL
PREVIEW
BUT I SWEAR ...
...I'LL SHOW HIM I CAN CLING TO HOPE.
...COULD BE THE HIGHEST FORM OF ARTIFICIAL EXISTENCE.
WHAT WILL AYUMU DO IN THE FACE OF THE MOST ASTONISHING TRUTH, FINALLY REVEALED!?
NO MATTER HOW DESTRUCTIVE A FIGHT IT BECOMES.
QUITE POSSIBLY, AYUMU NARUMI...
THE RESULTS OF AYUMU AND HIZUMI'S DNA TESTS ARE OUT! KIRIE TSUCHIYA HARBORS DOUBTS ABOUT THE MYSTERIOUS REALITY AND GOES TO HIZUMI'S PARENTS TO ASK ABOUT IT DIRECTLY, GIVING RISE TO AN URPRISING TRUTH THAT BECOMES ALL TOO CLEAR...WITH THEIR SHARED FATE, AYUMU AND HIZUMI PUT THIER CONVICTIONS AND THE VERY MEANING OF THEIR EXISTENCES ON THE LINE...!!

DO YOU THINK IT'S BECAUSE NARUMI-SAN AND HIS BROTHER WERE SO IDENTICAL...
...THAT HE HAD ANYTHING AND EVERYTHING TAKEN FROM HIM?
THAT MEANS HIZUMI AND YAIBA...
...ARE ALSO TWINS.
THE DEEP, COLD MIRE...IS THE ABYSS OF ETERNAL SOLITUDE...
THE FATE THAT CORNERS US...
YOU...
...IS ONLY THAT AND NOTHING MORE, DON'T YOU SEE?
...KILLED KANON HILBERT.
TO BE CONTINUED IN VOLUME 14 OF "SPIRAL: THE BONDS OF REASONING"!!

To be continued. Please wait !

Spiral Work Diary
CAREFUL THAT YOU DON'T GET A CAVITY
.....
~IN THIS EDITION, I'LL ANSWER SOME OF YOUR REQUESTS.~
...I DECIDED I'D ANSWER SOME OF THE REQUESTS I'VE RECEIVED IN LETTERS.
MAYBE I'M RUNNING OUT OF MATERIAL?
SINCE I DON'T HAVE ANY INTERESTING STORIES FROM THE WORKPLACE THIS TIME AROUND...
"PLEASE SWITCH HIYONO AND RIO'S HAIRSTYLES." THIS IS ONE REQUEST I GET A LOT, BUT...!
AND WHILE I WAS AT IT, I THOUGHT I'D GIVE THE GUYS A GO TOO.
I CAN'T EVEN TELL WHO'S WHO ANYMORE ...
TRY TO MATCH THEM UP YOURSELF
...IT JUST REMINDS ME HOW IMPORTANT A CHARACTER'S "HAIRSTYLE" IS TO THEIR IDENTITY IN MANGA (OUCH.)

ANOTHER COMPLAINT I'VE BEEN GETTING A LOT RECENTLY IS, "I DON'T KNOW WHERE TO SEND MY FAN LETTER."
THIS IS ANOTHER REQUEST I GET A LOT. AND SINCE THERE'S NO WAY I COULD ACTUALLY DRAW IT, I HOPE YOU CAN SETTLE FOR THIS...
"PLEASE PUT EYES IN A DRESS." "PLEASE GIVE EYES PIGTAILS."
UNIFORM
PIGTAILS
EYES
...THAT REMINDS ME THAT THERE'S NO ADDRESS FOR FAN LETTERS MENTIONED IN THE COMIC.
THAT EXPLAINS WHY SO MANY COME TO THE OLD ADDRESS.
IT SEEMS MOST (JAPANESE) FANS HAVE BEEN LOOKING AT THE COPYRIGHT PAGE IN THE SPIRAL NOVELS AND SENDING THEIR FAN LETTERS THERE, BUT...
SO HERE IT IS.
EITA MIZUNO
C/O YEN PRESS
HACHETTE BOOK GROUP
237 PARK AVE.
NEW YORK, NY 10017
UNITED STATES
FOR LETTERS TO SHIRODAIRA-SENSEI, JUST CHANGE THIS NAME HERE TO "KYO SHIRODAIRA-SENSEI!"
IT MAKES ME HAPPY TO KNOW THAT PEOPLE OUT THERE ARE TRYING TO SEND ME LETTERS.
CARD: MEMO
INCIDENTALLY, EVEN THOUGH I'M ALWAYS SENDING IN THE DRAFTS, I STILL CAN'T WRITE THE PUBLISHER'S ADDRESS (CORRECTLY) BY HEART.
I'M JUST SO NERVOUS I'LL GET IT WRONG

AFTERWORD

Sorry to all the fans of Kanon Hilbert out there. Sincerely and from the bottom of my heart. I know I started this message with an apology, but this is Kyo Shirodaira. And this is Volume 13.

I foresee many an angry and hurt complaint, so I'm tempted to justify myself with the very deep reason behind my action. But since it is directly related to events to come, I will only lower my head and say it again: I'm so very sorry.

I mean it — it was out of necessity. You could even say that it was vital for preparing all of you for what's to come without completely losing hope.

When things are going right, people don't have any problem speaking about things like hopes and dreams. But reality is always full of victims, things rarely go right, and severe mistakes are easily made. When such a reality is staring you right in the eye, only hopeful and positive words offer you any chance of overcoming the hardship.

Details on that will begin to surface in the next volume. But if I may say one more thing, there's nothing cowardly about hiding the risk you're taking and speaking only as if things are going perfectly well.

Okay, that's enough excuses. Now I'm going to talk about the fact that we're at Volume 13. When I started this *Spiral* series, I had a goal to finish it off at thirteen volumes. Even if I had to wrap it up a little sooner than that, if I could at least run the series for about that long, I'd have considered it a a major success for me. So that was my goal.

Also, since the number thirteen carries the taboo of being bad luck, it's often used in mysteries. For example, when short stories are compiled into anthologies, they intentionally try to choose

thirteen for it. Or when a publisher wants to put out an anthology of new works, they'll aim to make it by thirteen different authors. And then there's the trick of having the number thirteen appear somewhere in the title.

It was for those very reasons that I made my goal for this series a total of thirteen volumes. But as you can see, thirteen is not a big enough number to reach the object of the series. Still, if anything, by this volume the climax is already visible. It really is within sight.

Well, to wrap things up, I have one more apology to make. Regarding the project running on GAN-GAN NET concurrent with the sale of the comic, it's going to go on a little break for this leg of it. A thousand aplogies.

Since last time, I've been releasing an intermittent series of commentaries on the work. But since the story is reaching its climax and the truth is on the brink of being revealed, it's just not the time to be looking back upon the past and throwing myself into nostalgia.

If possible, after our story's settled back down, I'd like to be able to run it again. My sincerest apologies. This afterword has been nothing but one long apology. But in any case, the wrap-up to our story is closer than ever.

Well, I'll be praying that we meet again in Volume 14.

城平京

KYO SHIRODAIRA

Spiral

THE BONDS OF REASONING

13

Omake!

EAR-LIER...
YOU KNOW... ...I APPRECIATE YOU COMING TO VISIT US IN THE HOSPITAL, BUT...
YAY!
THAT'S A FINE MELON
...REMEMBER THAT YOU'RE A CELEBRITY!
WHEN YOU LEAVE, I GET BOM-BARDED WITH QUES-TIONS!
3
OMIGOD!
1
4
...IS WHAT THEY TOLD ME, SO I'M TRYING A LITTLE.
BUT THOSE AREN'T WORKING AT ALL.
2
SORTA.
ARE THOSE GLASSES SUPPOSED TO BE A DISGUISE?
.....SAY, RUTH-KUN.

TRANSLATION NOTES

Page 9

Koshien is a major baseball stadium in Japan built in 1924 to host national high school baseball competitions.

SPIRAL
The Bonds of Reasoning ⑬

Kyo Shirodaira
Eita Mizuno

Translation: Christine Dashiell

Lettering: Alexis Eckerman

This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events, locales, or persons, living or dead, is coincidental.

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